

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 35

The Aeonian Race

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: Realmship

Within the Endless Territories.

A dimensional gateway was suddenly torn open in the empty void next to an enormous, blazing star. A white-robed youth and a silver-robed man stepped out from within it.

“We’re back! Haha, we’re back in the Endless Territories.” Ninedust laughed jubilantly, “We travelled through the Great Dark for so long without seeing any other living creatures at all. We didn’t even see any stars or chaosworlds. That sense of loneliness was truly stifling and oppressing. I can’t help but shiver when I think about how those Eternal Emperors choose to spend a million years traversing the Great Dark enroute to another realmverse.”

“Once we succeed in our Daomerges and gain eternal life, perhaps we might come to the same decision.” Ji Ning smiled.

“Yes... we have to succeed in the Daomerge. We have to! We made a killing off our visit to the Stone Hellephant Wall; to me, this place was just as beneficial as the Waveshift Realm was.” Ninedust was in high spirits.

Ning nodded as well. He had indeed benefited greatly from this trip. The greatest benefit lay in how they had the chance to memorize the Dao-guidance left behind by that Autarch. Next came the verdant azuresoul Ning had acquired and those six Emperor-class golems... and then there were the various Sithe relics they had swept out of the Sithe ruins.

“Unfortunately, that realmship we found was damaged. Otherwise, we really would’ve won a fortune,” Ninedust sighed.

“It wasn’t just damaged, it was in pieces. It would’ve been wonderful if Autarch Bolin had held back just a little bit and didn’t destroy the shuttle.” Ning sighed as well. “Still... if he really hadn’t destroyed it, he probably would’ve taken it with him when he left.”

“Yes.” Ninedust felt resigned as well.

Realmships... according to what the golems Ning had captured and

bound had told them, these were flying shuttles that had been created by the Sithe which allowed them to travel between realmverses. Using these vessels, it was possible to spend less than a hundred thousand years in travelling from one realmverse to another! To powerful cultivators, this was a negligibly short period of time.

Even Hegemons found the trip from one realmverse to another a taxing one which required an extremely long period of time. Realmships, however, were able to accomplish it in a fraction of the time. They truly were incredibly fast, which meant they were incredibly precious as well!

There had been more than thirty thousand Sithe within the Stone Hellephant Wall, but only the two highest-ranking Sithe owned realmships, one each. One had been taken away by Autarch Bolin, while the other had been destroyed in the fierce fighting. Because realmships possessed regenerative capabilities, some of its parts had managed to slowly recover... but alas, the other parts were so totally trashed that they were completely unable to heal.

There were two parts of the shuttle which were in fairly good shape. Ning and Ninedust had each taken one of the two parts.

“A pity how severe the damage was. Less than half of it was remaining. There’s no way to use it at all.” Ning shook his head.

“We would’ve struck it rich if it was usable,” Ninedust sighed.

“Let’s not get too greedy,” Ning replied. The two continued to chat while separating themselves from the surrounding area, ensuring that no one was able to hear their conversation.

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The golems they had bound had all existed since the days of the Sithe. They naturally knew a great deal about the Sithe race! Ning and Ninedust learned a great deal after interrogating the golems, including many Sithe secrets. At first, they hadn’t really even understood how important the realmship fragments they had collected were; it was only after the golems helped them sort through the treasures that they knew what a realmship was.

“Darknorth, didn’t we agree to go to the Aeonian Kingdom? This doesn’t seem to be the right way,” Ninedust said with some surprise.

“We’re taking a slight detour,” Ning said. “It’ll only take a day or two.”

“Something you need to take care of?” Ninedust asked.

“The two of us have been visiting some truly extraordinary places recently. Although we’re both confident in our skills, it’s also true that we can die at any moment.” Ning sighed. “I’m planning to leave a few of these Emperor-class golems behind in my homeland. That way, even if I do fail my Daomerge and perish, my homeland will be at least somewhat protected with those Emperor-class golems present.”

Ninedust felt a mixed bag of emotions upon hearing this. He asked, “Darknorth, is your homeland very weak?”

“Yes. I can be considered the strongest person from my homeland, I suppose,” Ning said.

The Three Realms... hundreds of millions of years had gone past, and it had grown quite a bit... but it was still quite young in the grand scheme of things. Thus far, it didn’t even have any other Samsara Daolords aside from Ning himself! How could Ning not focus his attention on it?

“That’s quite a heavy burden to bear.” Ninedust sighed. “I’ve never had that sort of experience before. Although I acquired six Emperor-class golems, they really don’t mean that much to the Ancient cultivators as a race. These are all fairly weak Emperor-class golems, after all.”

“The Ancients are one of the six major powers of the Endless Territories. If you had to be responsible for the entire Ancient race, you would have to at least be a Hegemon,” Ning teased. “If the Three Realms could ever rise to become one of the top organizations of the Endless Territories, I would feel plenty proud.”

Whoosh. Ning and Ninedust emerged from yet another void tunnel, with a black-robed Ning standing at the other end of it.

“What’s this?” Ninedust stared at the distant black-robed Ning with surprise.

“My Primaltwin,” Ning explained. Not even the Dao Alliance or the Brightshore Kingdom knew that he had a Primaltwin; Ning had never made it public before! However, Ninedust was his friend for life; why should he hide it from Ninedust?

“Primaltwin?” Ninedust was stunned. “You have a Primaltwin? I’ve never heard of this before.” Moments later, he felt extremely moved; the existence of a Primaltwin was definitely a huge secret which generally wouldn’t be made public.

“You hid this very well indeed! I really can’t help but envy you. We Ancient cultivators are never able to have a Primaltwin,” Ninedust said.

“Primaltwins can only be created when you start cultivating as a mortal. All of you Ancient cultivators are born at the World level; how could you possibly have one?” Ning sighed. “Countless mortal cultivators would dream of one day reaching the World level, but you start off being born at this level with bodies comparable to Daolords... and you complain about envying us?”

As Ning spoke, he flew towards his black-robed Primaltwin. He sent a jade gourd flying out towards the Primaltwin. His Primaltwin accepted it, turned and tore open a spacetime tunnel, then departed.

The jade bottle held a total of six Emperor-class golems, the Sithe disk, and some other treasures. Emperor-class golems were of some use to Ning, after all, which was why he kept half for himself and gave half to the Three Realms.

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After spending thirty more years traversing through the Brightshore Kingdom’s pathways, Ning and Ninedust finally reached the Aeonian Kingdom.

“The Aeonian Kingdom.”

Ning and Ninedust stood atop a chaos planet, staring off into the distance. At the opposite end of the vast void was an enormous, roiling sea of blood. Above the sea of blood was an enormous citadel that glowed

with dazzlingly beautiful golden light. This castle had to be trillions of kilometers in size and emanated an aura of unspeakable power that washed out in every direction. Even at Ning and Ninedust's current level of power, they felt a breathtaking sense of pressure.

This... this was the Aeonian Kingdom! It was this great castle which had kept the Aeonians alive for so long. Not even Hegemons would dare to barge into the Aeonian Kingdom, the homeland of the Aeonians!

"I've always heard of how mysterious the Aeonian Kingdom is, but I've never had a chance to actually enter it," Ninedust snickered. "I now finally have a chance."

"Is the Autarch's medallion resonating with anything?" Ning asked.

"It started to do so half a year ago," Ninedust laughed.

"Why didn't you tell me? I kept on pulling you closer and closer through spacetime teleportation."

"I wanted to get an up-close view of the Aeonian Kingdom with my own eyes. It really is rather stunning." Ninedust stared at the view before him contentedly.

"So I spent the past half year doing all that for nothing, eh?" Ning enjoyed the view as well. The Aeonian Kingdom truly was a stunning and beautiful site to behold. The two viewed it carefully for quite some time before deciding to go inside.

Swoosh. Ninedust waved his hand, pulling Ning into his estate-world. He then held the Autarch's medallion up high as he activated the power within it.

Boom! An exalted aura of blood-colored power covered Ninedust. Swoosh! It tore straight through spacetime, causing him to instantly disappear.

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The Aeonian Kingdom was a place filled with many secrets. The most mysterious, secretive place was within a certain world. This was a place

which even the Aeonians found difficult to enter... and each time they did manage to enter, they had to first pay an enormous price.

A rift suddenly appeared in the void above this mysterious world. Swoosh! The Ninedust Sectlord's figure flew out from the rift.

"We arrived." Ninedust scanned his surroundings, rather puzzled. His face suddenly tightened. He waved his hand, causing a white-robed youth to appear next to him. "We've already been teleported inside, Darknorth. Look over there, quick!" Ninedust pointed off into the distance.

Ning followed his gaze, only to see an absolutely enormous and dazzling astral river. There was a flying vessel within the flows of the astral river, and in front of the vessel was a strange tower-shaped flying object. At the very tip of the tower there were three royal thrones and three onyx humanoids seated atop them. The tower had a total of nine levels, and each level had silver-robed Daolords standing on them.

A total of three hundred of those silver-robed Daolords could be seen! "The Sithe?" Ning was rather surprised.

Chapter 2: Bazu

The flying vessel and the strange tower were facing each other. Atop the tower were three onyx figures and three silver-robed Daolords?

“Wait, something’s wrong.” Ji Ning and Ninedust quickly noticed how something was off.

“Their auras seem off. They don’t seem like the Sithe we saw before,” Ning said softly.

“Let’s go take a look,” Ninedust said. Ning agreed, and the two began to quietly creep forwards.

As they moved closer and closer, the two were able to see the stone stele hanging right next to the flying vessel. “That stele...?” Ning and Ninedust hurriedly inspected it, quickly recognizing and reading the characters on the stone stele. The stele said:

I am Bolin.

I had five personal disciples. My fifth disciple, Bazu, was the most talented and the strongest of the five, far surpassing ordinary Hegemons. However, he was the first to die by the hands of the Sithe, and he was actually the third Hegemon to perish after the Sithe revealed their fangs and claws. In that battle, the Sithe sent out an entire regiment commanded by three of their Black Emperors to ambush and kill my disciple.

In that battle, my disciple Bazu slew a hundred and twenty-six Silver Daolords and a Black Emperor, but in the end he was surrounded and slain as well.

Although I hurried to him as fast as I could, I still arrived just a bit too late.

By now... war has begun! If our cultivator civilizations are defeated in this war, my hope is that our many worlds will continue to give birth to more and more cultivators, who can test themselves against the Silver Daolords and the Black Emperors here. That way, they can gain a sense for just how strong the Sithe are. Remember, these are just common

footsoldiers of the Sithe race; they cannot be considered the true Sithe elites. You absolutely must not be overconfident against the Sithe; when you fight, you must go all-out.

The 318 nearby planets within the astral river next to us each hold a legacy within them which was left behind by one of the Hegemons who follow me. None of us know how many of them will survive this war, and it is possible that all of them will be doomed, representing an end to the cream of the crop of the cultivator civilizations and an end to a force that was built up over countless aeons. They have all left their legacies here in the hopes that our cultivator civilizations shall never fully perish.

Even if we cultivators end up losing this battle, I still believe that our worlds shall give birth to an endless stream of resistance fighters. One day, the Sithe shall be eliminated.

These are the words of Bolin!

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Ning and Ninedust were stunned for quite some time after reading the characters on the stone stele. They could sense the stately yet determined fighting will which was inherent within those words; although Autarch Bolin had been in great pain upon seeing his disciple perish, when he wrote upon this stone stele he was completely focused on preserving the cultivator civilizations as a whole.

“Fortunately, we ended up winning that war,” Ning murmured.

“Yes. For Autarch Bolin to leave behind so many precautions... I really can’t imagine just how powerful the Sithe once were,” Ninedust sighed.

“The Autarch said that we can spar against these ‘Silver Daolords’ and these ‘Black Emperors’,” Ning said.

“Are they capable of fighting?” Ninedust glanced at the distant tower. “I’ll give it a try first.” As he spoke, he immediately flew over.

Once Ninedust moved closer towards the flying tower, one of the Black Emperors standing atop the tower suddenly glanced downwards and said coldly, “Go and kill that enemy.”

“Yes, Emperor!” Instantly, one of the Silver Daolords on the bottommost levels of the tower immediately acknowledged the order. His aura of power quickly expanded and grew in might as he flew towards the Ninedust Sectlord.

As for Ning, he just watched from afar. He wasn’t too worried; Ninedust was much better than him at staying alive.

Whoosh. The Silver Daolord charged straight towards Ninedust with a longspear in its hands.

“I want to see just how strong a ‘real’ Sithe Silver Daolord is!” Ninedust was eager to do battle, and he sent his longstaff towards the oncoming attack, causing a seemingly endless series of ripples to appear around it.

Boom! The tip of the spear clashed head-on against the longstaff. Ninedust immediately felt his longstaff tremble to the point where he nearly lost control of it. As for the longspear, it continued its downwards stab towards him. Slash – it stabbed Ninedust on his chest! Ninedust’s eyes widened in disbelief. With a whoosh, he transformed into a vast wave that quickly retreated backwards.

“You want to run?” The Silver Daolord pressed the attack, his longspear striking at more than a hundred times the speed of light.

Ninedust immediately transformed into water once more as he continued his hurried retreat. Slash! Slash! Slash! The Silver Daolord launched one attack after another, the tip of his longspear gleaming with incomparably sharp light. Ninedust let out a miserable cry, “I can feel the pain even through my invulnerable aquaform! This is terrifying.” While howling, he continued to flee.

“Need my help?” Ning shouted to him.

“Not yet, not yet!” Ninedust immediately replied. However, after Ninedust fled a certain distance away the Silver Daolord suddenly came to a halt. The Silver Daolord glanced coldly at Ninedust, then flew back to the tower and returned to its original position on the bottom level. Its aura of incredible power quickly dissipated as it seemed to go back to normal.

Ninedust fled over next to Ning, transforming back into human form. "Whew." Ninedust let out a sigh of relief.

"You were beaten in just one clash?" Ning smirked.

"They were definitely much more powerful than the three clan leaders," Ninedust said quickly. "That Silver Daolord had extremely formidable spear-arts; I imagine he was on par with me! Given that he had also undergone the Ritual Sacrificium to become a Silver Daolord, he is naturally much stronger than I am."

"So this is what true Silver Daolords are like. Those three clan leaders were at far too low a level of insight." Ning nodded. "Those three Black Emperors are in charge of a total of three hundred Silver Daolords... how terrifying. These Silver Daolords are all comparable to the eight Archons, the lords of the Sacred Cities. Three hundred of them working together... not even a Hegemon would be able to withstand them." Three hundred Silver Daolords truly was a terrifyingly strong force!

"Autarch Bolin's personal disciple, Hegemon Bazu, was quite strong; even though he was surrounded, he was able to kill 126 Silver Daolords and a Black Emperor." Ninedust sighed in amazement.

Ning felt admiration towards Hegemon Bazu as well. During the Dawn War, both of the Hegemons of the Endless Territories had perished in order to take down that Black Emperor. Clearly, Hegemon Bazu was much more powerful than they had been... but alas, he had still died."

"I'll go try it as well." Ning manifested three heads and six arms, then charged forwards with six Northbow swords at the ready.

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The flying tower continued to hover there in the void. Once Ning moved closer to it, one of the Black Emperors at the top of the tower glanced down at Ning and then ordered, "Go and kill the invader."

Instantly, the spear-wielding Silver Daolord at the very bottom of the tower acknowledged: "Yes, Emperor." As it spoke, it flew towards Ning.

"These aren't actual living beings; they are nothing more than

simulacra.” Ning could tell that they weren’t alive, but he still couldn’t help but feel admiration for the Autarch; to be able to create simulacra of three Black Emperors and three hundred Silver Daolords was absolutely incredible. Autarchs truly were unfathomably strong! It was thanks to the leadership of the Autarchs and countless cultivators sacrificing themselves that they had been able to eliminate the Sithe in the end, albeit at enormous cost.”

“Hah!” The Silver Daolord swept out with his longspear, spinning it in a circular arc as he swept it towards Ning in an indomitable fashion.

Clang! Ning moved to dodge while gently striking out with his sword using the Omega Sword Dao – Soleheart to affect the Silver Daolord’s attacks.

Although the Silver Daolord’s attack was on par with Ninedust’s staff-arts, Ning was still slightly superior to him. However, the difference wasn’t that great, and the Silver Daolord’s other advantages more than compensated for it.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Boom! The two continued to fight, causing shockwaves to blast out in every direction which caused the void to tremble.

Ning and the Silver Daolord were evenly matched in the fight.

“Eh?” One of the Black Emperors at the top of the tower frowned. “Even after this much time has passed, he still has yet to be captured? Another one of you, go and kill him!”

“Yes, Emperor!” Instantly, a Silver Daolord wielding a pair of hatchets charged out as well, forcing Ning to slowly begin to withdraw.

“Don’t even think about fleeing!” the spear-wielding Daolord and the hatchet-wielding Daolord shouted in unison. The two had surrounded Ning and were attacking him from a pincer position. Ning was immediately at a disadvantage, but thanks to his defensive prowess and his six Northbow swords he was able to hold on. While defending, he continued to retreat at high speed.

“Eh? Another one, go.” The Black Emperor at the top of the tower issued the order yet again, causing a third Silver Daolord to charge forwards. This one bore a giant warblade on its back. However, before it managed to arrive Ning had already moved beyond the critical distance, at which point all of the Silver Daolords withdrew as well. This was something which Autarch Bolin had implemented; he had done all this to help temper and train these juniors, not kill them after all.

“What a tough challenge. If one doesn’t do the job, send two. If two can’t hack it, send three...” Ning shook his head.

“If we’re ever able to force all three hundred Silver Daolords and all three Black Emperors to attack in unison... now that would be truly something,” Ninedust said eagerly.

“Haha, that’ll have to wait for after you complete your Daomerge,” Ning said. “Oh, right. Autarch Bolin said that the 318 planets nearest to us all have legacies left behind by the various Hegemons. Let’s go take a look.”

“Right.” Ninedust was curious as well.

Swoosh! Swoosh! The two quickly flew towards the planet located closest to the stone stele.

This planet wasn’t all that large, just ten thousand kilometers in circumference. As soon as they landed atop the planet, they immediately sensed a ripple of power transmit into their minds. They could vaguely ‘see’ the mental image of a four-legged beast towering before them, its voice booming within their minds.

“I am Hegemon Thousand Rhinos, a retainer of Autarch Bolin! The war against the Sithe has already begun, and all of us Hegemons are following Autarch Bolin into battle against the Sithe. No one knows what the end result will be, and so I have left all of my insights and supreme techniques behind in this place. The cultivator civilizations shall not perish! The Sithe shall one day be exterminated!”

Chapter 3: A Heavy Feeling

Ji Ning felt rather moved and inspired. He could sense how Hegemon Thousand Rhinos had been completely determined to battle the Sithe to the death, and could also sense how much hope the Hegemon had placed towards the cultivator civilizations as a whole.

“I wonder if this senior was able to survive the Dawn War or not.” Ning knew just how brutal the Dawn War had been, because all of the Hegemons of the Endless Territories during that era had perished in the Dawn War. “No matter what... in the end, our side won. The sacrifices of all those slain cultivators were not in vain.”

Boom! A wave of power shot out as a large amount of information flooded into Ning’s mind. This was the legacy of Hegemon Thousand Rhinos.

Ning trained in the Omega Sword Dao and had received guidance from the Autarch’s Daos; by now, he had a far broader vision than many. These Hegemon-level legacies were of use to him in comparing to his own Dao, but the secret arts were of more help to him.

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Some time later, Ning and Ninedust woke up from their reverie atop the small planet. They exchanged a glance.

“Incredible.” Ninedust’s voice was rather hoarse.

“Yes, quite incredible.” Ning nodded. “For the sake of ensuring that the cultivator civilizations will continue, he held nothing back at all. He didn’t even require us to swear any lifeblood oaths when learning these legacies.”

“Yes.” Ninedust nodded. It was true; neither had been forced to swear lifeblood oaths! It must be understood that the more valuable a legacy was, the more likely it was that the successor would have to swear a lifeblood oath in order to learn it.

The Sword Hegemon in the alternate universe, the Paragon of Pills, the

Brightshore Hegemon... they had all required lifeblood oaths that their teachings would not be taught to outsiders. Even fairly ordinary sects like Vastheaven Palace required these oaths. Ning had been forced to pay a significant price just to transmit those fairly ordinary techniques and divine abilities of Vastheaven Palace back to the Three Realms.

But... Thousand Rhinos had been an exalted Hegemon! And yet, he had unstintingly passed down all of the legacies he had developed over the course of countless aeons to Ning and Ninedust without even requiring them to swear lifeblood oaths.

"Let's go to that other planet," Ning said.

"Let's go." Ninedust nodded.

Swoosh! Swoosh! The two flew next to each other like streaks of light as they moved to the planet closest to them. This planet was also fairly small, just ten thousand kilometers in size. When their feet landed atop the planet, they once more sensed that ripple of power be transmitted into their minds. This time, Ning felt as though he could see a snowy-winged man who emanated a halo of white light.

"I am God Emperor Helong, a retainer of Autarch Bolin and a master of an otherverse. I established my own church, and over the course of countless years I spread my organization across three entire realmverses. I had thought that I would be able to continue my campaign of conquest... but the appearance of the Sithe brought me back to my senses. Only then did I understand that to the Sithe, I was nothing more than an easily crushed ant.

"The Sithe seek to enslave all cultivators. Those like us who refuse to submit are all subject to death. Although I have been alive for countless years and have conquered for countless years, when I think of how all cultivator civilizations might one day be enslaved by the Sithe, I have only one thought in my mind... to exterminate them!"

"I, God Emperor Helong, shall do everything in my power to slay all Sithe. Future cultivators, if we fail in our task, you must take it up in our stead. Kill, kill, kill! You must exterminate every single Sithe!"

The lofty, noble voice of the snowy-winged man was filled with murderous malice that was so strong it shook even Ning's Dao-heart. Moments later, a large amount of information began to flood into his mind. This was all the legacies which God Emperor Helong had to offer.

A long time later, Ning and Ninedust opened their eyes and exchanged a glance.

"Such power." Ninedust was stunned.

"I thought that the [Heartsword] art was quite unique, but who would've thought that God Emperor Helong would've come up with a similar technique, the [God Emperor's Apocalypse] art?" Ning nodded. This was another technique that allowed for the perfect fusion of heartforce with divine power; thanks to this technique, God Emperor Helong had reached a level of power that surpassed that of ordinary Hegemons! This was what gave him the strength needed to take control of an otherverse and then spread his organization across three separate realmverses. His church had a total of eight Hegemons within it!

"I wonder if this mighty figure was able to survive," Ninedust said.

"Given how strong he was? It is entirely possible that he did." Still, Ning didn't feel confident in this guess. The information they had learned regarding the Sithe from the Emperor-class golems they had bound had completely shocked them... and that was probably just the tip of the iceberg!

God Emperor Helong had been very strong, yes. But compared to the Sithe? Just as the God Emperor had said; he was nothing more than an ant.

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They visited one planet after another, flying from legacy to legacy and collecting them all. This vast astral river contained trillions of planets and stars, but only the 318 planets closest to the flying vessel had legacies.

A grand total of 318 Hegemonic legacies!

They listened to the exhortations these Hegemons had left behind for

posterity. They could sense the boundless wisdom and indescribable hard work which permeated each and every legacy... and in every case, neither Ning nor Ninedust were forced to swear lifeblood oaths.

"Whew." Ning let out a long sigh. He felt as though he was releasing a pent-up sense of pressure which had been weighing on his heart.

"None of them required lifeblood oaths. In other words, we are allowed to transmit all 318 Hegemonic legacies as we please." Ninedust sighed in amazement. "We're actually given free reign."

Ning was excited as well. So many techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts... and they were allowed to transmit them as they pleased! His homeland, the Three Realms, would now have a true foundation for it to grow to incredible heights!

"These seniors probably WANTED us to transmit them," Ning said. "If the cultivator civilizations were truly defeated in that great war, there would naturally be a need to produce more cultivators of great power. For the sake of this war, they had already cast off even their fear of death; they naturally wouldn't mind others transmitting their legacies."

"But in the end, our side won the war." Ninedust sighed with emotion. "Thus, every single modern-day organization is extremely protective of its precious legacies and absolutely refuse to transmit them casually to others."

"In the past, the cultivator civilizations were facing a total war against the Sithe. The Sithe have been destroyed long ago, and so the cultivator civilizations naturally turned against each other instead." Ning shook his head. An outside threat would prompt internal unity, but once the threat was dealt with? The internal strife would appear once more.

Even a place as small as the Three Realms had fierce civil wars. Hell, even tiny clans had internal strife, to say nothing of a place as vast as the Endless Territories! The various realmverses most likely battled against each other as well. For example, the Dark Kingdom consisted of refugees who had fled from another realmverse. As a result, they were ostracized and oppressed by the locals of the Endless Territories.

“Darknorth,” Ninedust said solemnly.

“Eh?” Ning looked at him.

“We absolutely cannot just hand out these legacies willy-nilly,” Ninedust said. “Once a major power realizes what we have, we’ll be in serious trouble.”

“Agreed. Every single organization’s foundation rests upon its powerful experts and its precious legacies.” Ning nodded solemnly.

“After we leave, I’m planning to take a trip back home,” Ninedust said seriously. “I’m going to write down and transcribe all of the legacies we’ve acquired. I’ll let my avatar hold onto them, and I won’t make them public. Only if I die or after I complete my Daomerge attempt will I transmit these things to the rest of the Ancients.”

Ninedust let out a sigh. “These legacies will have an absolutely enormous impact. If I make them public too soon, it’ll probably have certain repercussions for me. After I complete my Daomerge, I’ll have nothing else to worry about... and if I die, I also won’t have anything to worry about.”

“I won’t be in a hurry to transmit them either.” Ning nodded. “My homeland is still far too weak.” In the end, he was going to give these legacies to the Three Realms, but it couldn’t be rushed. Ning was preparing to first slowly introduce to the Three Realms the more shallow techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts that were suitable for Daolords of the First Step! As for the more profound ones? He would take it slow. If he died, then he would naturally arrange for the full transmission.

Legacies from over three hundred Hegemons... this brought an enormous sense of pressure to both Ning and Ninedust. Neither dared to transmit them casually. In the end, they were still too weak; only if they reached Hegemony themselves would they have nothing to fear.

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Atop a planet. Ning and Ninedust were in secluded meditation within a temporal thatched cottage and a temporal log cabin. Both needed time to

properly ‘digest’ these legacies.

The towering battle-intent which the Hegemons had infused into their messages was actually a form of tempering for them as well, causing both of their Dao-hearts to change slightly.

“With these things, my chances of succeeding in the Daomerge have increased once again.” Ninedust walked out of the temporal log cabin, a smile on his face.

A Voidsea Jadeseal, an Autarch’s Dao-guidance, and over three hundred Hegemonic legacies. Ninedust was starting to feel more and more confident.

“Eh? Darknorth is still meditating? He’s quite a bit slower than me.” Ninedust chuckled, then turned to glance at the flying tower. “Time to test out those Silver Daolords again.”

Swoosh. Ninedust soared into the skies. Although he was still far weaker than a Silver Daolord, he would at least be able to keep himself safe. This was a good opportunity for him to temper himself.

Chapter 4: The Strange Planet

Ji Ning needed much more time to ‘digest’ these legacies than Ninedust, because Ninedust had already reached the Verge as a Daolord. All he needed to do was to perfect his Dao and accumulate more experience so as to improve his odds of succeeding at the Daomerge. Ning, however, was different. He was just a Daolord of the Third Step, which meant he needed many more insights. He naturally had to carefully immerse himself in these Hegemonic legacies.

“We really have gained tremendously from this visit.” Ning emerged from his temporal cottage, then stared at the flying tower off in the distance. “Legacies from over three hundred Hegemons... this will be of enormous help to both me and the Three Realms.”

The divine abilities were useless to Ning, but the secrets arts were extremely useful. Although he did have a secret art bestowed by that dead Sword Hegemon from the otherverse, these three hundred-plus Hegemons bestowed far more. In fact, there were four who were focused on the Dao of the Sword! Ning ended up choosing a secret art that suited him the most.

“Once I become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, I’ll simultaneously train in both of these secret arts! Once I use the two of them via my Yin-Yang Sword Domain, they’ll mutually reinforce and support each other...” Ning was quite eager to see what would happen. There was a certain finesse to choosing secret arts, and the more powerful a secret art was the more requirements it had with regards to the level of the wielder’s insights into the Dao.

The nine novessence arts, for example, needed one to be able to perfectly master and merge together nine types of Dao lightning. Ninedust’s Ripplewater art required incredible insight into the Dao of Water. The Sword Hegemon’s secret art and this new secret art which Ning had chosen were both focused on the Dao of the Sword. Both required the wielder to know a great deal regarding that Dao.

“Ninedust,” Ning called out loudly. His voice traversed the flows of space and passed into the ears of the distant Ninedust, who was battling more than a hundred million kilometers off in the distance.

“Haha...” Ninedust hurriedly retreated, pulling away from the Silver Daolord as he glanced backwards. “Darknorth, you finally came out.”

“Judging from the way you just fought, you’ve perfected your ultimate attacks even further. That supremely aggressive staff-stance, you executed with water-like fluidity. This shows that your mastery of the Dao of Water has improved.” Ning flew over like a streak of light, quickly arriving next to Ninedust as he spoke in praise.

“Twenty-five out of those hundreds of Hegemons were skilled in the Dao of Water, allowing me to benefit greatly from their insights. I feel as though my chances at the Daomerge are growing better and better,” Ninedust said smugly. “I feel as though I have a ten percent chance.”

Ten percent. It sounded puny, but Daolords normally had less than a hundredth of a percent at completing the Daomerge!

“Congratulations!” Ning revealed a delighted look. He truly did feel happy for Ninedust. As for himself, although he had gained the Autarch’s Dao-guidance and also reviewed the many legacies of the Hegemons, his path was still that of the Omega Sword Dao; it was a path that was untold times more difficult than the one which Ninedust had chosen! There was a limit to how much benefit these other legacies would be to him. None of those Hegemons had chosen an Omega Dao, and so his chances at the Daomerge still remained as infinitesimally small as ever.

If he failed his Daomerge while Ninedust succeeded, he would ask Ninedust to help take care of the Three Realms. If a Hegemon watched over it, its inhabitants would have a much easier life.

“How about you? You must’ve gained even more insights than me,” Ninedust said.

“I’m not quite there yet, but I feel close to a breakthrough,” Ning said. After distilling the experiences of over three hundred Hegemons, Ning had gained quite a few new insights into his Heavenbreaker stance. He wasn’t

too far away from reaching the fourth stage of it.

“That’s enough chatting. I’m gonna go spar a bit against those Silver Daolords.” Ning immediately manifested three heads and six arms, then charged towards the flying tower with six Northbow swords at the ready.

A few moments later, an onyx humanoid standing at the top of the flying tower ordered for three silver Daolords to attack.

“He dares to come again?”

“Kill him.”

“Kill this Daolord.” The three Silver Daolords charged towards Ning, with Ning coming to a halt close to the outer perimeter and engaging them in a battle there. When he sensed that he wasn’t able to hold on any longer, he would immediately retreat outside of the perimeter. That way, the Silver Daolords would withdraw as well.

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Ning and Ninedust both understood what Autarch Bolin’s intentions were. Autarch Bolin had created this world, then had his hundreds of Hegemon retainers leave down their legacies, precisely so that he could ensure the future cultivators would have access to good Immortal techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts.

He had even gone so far as to make simulacra of the Sithe’s Black Emperors and Silver Daolords... all of this was for the sake of improving the combat power of the cultivators!

“He truly poured his heart into this,” Ning sighed with emotion.

“Darknorth! Darknorth!” After several years of battling, Ninedust suddenly called out, “We haven’t paid that flying vessel a visit yet. Shouldn’t we go inside and take a look?”

“Autarch Bolin didn’t say that the vessel held any treasures within it,” Ning said. The stone stele had only mentioned that one could spar against the simulated Sithe and acquire legacies from the Hegemons.

“We should still go take a look. Doing nothing but sparring against

Silver Daolords is kind of boring anyhow; by now, I understand every single technique they use,” Ninedust said.

“True. Battling is rather pointless by now.” Ning agreed with this assessment. When fighting against three Silver Daolords, he often found himself unable to hold on and thus was forced to retreat! But this wasn’t due to him being at a lower level of insight; in fact, he was on a higher level than all three of them. The problem was that his foes were incredibly fast and strong, and there was no answer for that. This made sparring against them of limited use to Ning.

“Let’s be careful,” Ning warned.

“It should be fine. Autarch Bolin wouldn’t have set up traps for us,” Ninedust said. Still, he chose to send one of his Emperor-class golems to scout first.

The flying vessel was completely empty inside. There were no traps inside, nor were there any treasures. There was just a line of words left behind on the inner walls:

“The only way to break through from Hegemony and reach Autarchy is to accumulate sufficient experience. Aside from this, there are no other paths.”

This line of words was filled with stately majesty. Clearly, they had been left behind by Autarch Bolin himself.

“Accumulate sufficient experience?” Ning and Ninedust stared at the line of words for a long time.

“Let’s not dwell on it too much. The greatest challenge standing in front of us is the Daomerge.” Ning smiled. “Let’s worry about this after succeeding in the Daomerge.”

“Agreed.” Ninedust nodded. “Oh, right. Darknorth, we’ve spent this entire time in the area around the flying vessel; we haven’t explored the other parts of this world. To tell you the truth, there’s a limit to how much this place is going to be use to us. I’m planning to explore this area a bit; if there’s nothing else here, I’m going to leave! But of course, if you want to

dally here a bit longer I can wait on a nearby planet and train there until you are ready to go."

"This place isn't of much use to me either." Ning agreed. "Come, let's walk around and see what there is to see. After that, we'll leave."

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This world which the Autarch had created was extremely large. Ning and Ninedust stood within the void above it.

"Heartworld, descend!" With but a thought, Ning send his vast heartworld projection rumbling downwards. It quickly spread out in every direction to encompass the entire planet.

"And?" Ninedust asked.

"The other parts of this world are completely empty and devoid of all things." Ning pointed off into the distance. "The only exception is over there. The astral river seems to pass through this entire world, and there's something inside it that radiates an aura of incredible power. Not even my heartworld projection is able to infiltrate it at all."

"Oh? It seems we need to spend a bit of time looking into this astral river." Ninedust was filled with excitement.

"Let's go." Swoosh! Swoosh! The two immediately entered the astral river and began to fly through it. The flying vessel, the flying tower, and the 318 small planets had been nothing more than a small part of this vast astral river which permeated the enormous world they were in.

"There are countless stars here, but they all seem quite ordinary." Ninedust was rather disappointed by what he found. By now, they had already been flying for more than three months and had searched through nearly half the astral river.

Rumble...

Far away, there was an enormous planet that was slowly revolving in place, emanating an aura of oppressive majesty. Ning and Ninedust were able to vaguely sense it even from a great distance, causing their eyes to

narrow. It must be remembered that all of the other planets were tiny, merely ten thousand kilometers or so in size. The vast planet they could vaguely see off in the distance, however, had to be at least ten billion kilometers in diameter.

“What an enormous planet, and what a powerful aura! So the astral river actually has such a special locale inside of it?” Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance, then immediately flew towards it. As they moved closer, they were able to see it with increasing clarity.

This planet was quite unique. On one side, it had a blazing red sea of flames that emanated an aura of incredible heat. The flamewaves which roiled that side were actually filled with the ripples of the Dao itself, with every single wave containing an amount of force comparable to a full-strength strike from a Daolord of the Fourth Step. This caused Ning and Ninedust to feel shocked.

The other side of the planet was an endless stream of deep-blue water that emanated an aura of infinite cold. This cold similarly radiated Dao-ripples of equal power to the other side.

“What an unusual planet.” Ning was rather surprised. One side was filled with a sea of flames, the other was filled with an icy sea of water. Both sides emanated the profound mysteries of the Dao. As for the hemispheric intersection where the hot and cold energies met and clashed against each other, an endless dense line of mist appeared.

Deep within the mist, they could vaguely make out the crown of a massive tree, as well as see a few long, skinny, fiery-red fruits hanging from the top.

“Judging from those leaves... that should be one of the eight types of sacred bloodfruit, the ‘omnigeddon bloodfruit’. But... these fruits look rather strange. And, generally speaking, a single omnigeddon bloodfruit tree should have just three fruits per harvest. I can already see roughly six of those fruits sprouting from the crown of the tree, and that’s with the rest of it shrouded by mist.” Ning was puzzled. “Is it some other type of fruit? Ninedust, can you recognize this fruit tree?”

Chapter 5: Surrounded by Observers

“Judging from the trunk, the branches, the leaves, and the aura of the fruit...” Ninedust frowned in puzzlement as well. “Yeah, that should definitely be an omnigeddon bloodfruit tree.” He was an Ancient cultivator who had a very high level of status within the race; as a result, he knew most of the precious materials and ingredients in the Chaosverse.

“But something feels off.” Ji Ning frowned.

“Yes, omnigeddon bloodfruits are round and slick; they don’t look long and skinny like that. In addition, there’s way too many fruits... and the tree itself seems to be a bit too large,” Ninedust said.

Ning blinked. Right. He hadn’t noticed it earlier, but ordinary omnigeddon bloodfruit trees were roughly just thirty meters tall. The crown of the mist-shrouded tree off in the distance, however, had to be over three million meters tall!

“Although it does look a bit odd, this tree is definitely a priceless treasure.” Ninedust’s gaze turned heated with eagerness. “Judging from the auras of those bloodfruits, they have to be quite extraordinary.”

“Let’s go take a look,” Ning said. The two didn’t hesitate, immediately flying carefully into the deep mist. Soon, they descended upon the area just outside the fog-shrouded region, the place where blazing heat met scorching cold and produced that mist. Ning and Ninedust were still able to see several tens of thousands of kilometers into the fog-shrouded region.

Whoooosh. Scorching waves of flaming heat washed over them from one side, while frigid waves of icy energy swept towards them from the other side. Ning and Ninedust descended upon the thin, narrow strip of land where the two elemental seas met and collided.

“Oh, a few more kids have come to test their luck.” A hoarse, grating voice that sounded like knives and swords grinding against each other suddenly rang out.

Ning and Ninedust were both badly startled. They hurriedly turned to look towards the direction of the voice, only to see the distant fog quickly begin to dissipate. A streak of deep blue light which was even denser than the fog came surging out of it, tearing the fog apart. Ning and Ninedust soon saw a strange deep blue creature that looked like a sea dragon crawl onto the thin 'bank' between the two sides of the world. It stared straight at Ning and Ninedust with its dark-gold eyes.

This dark blue dragon seemed to have been completely sculpted out of freezing ice, and it radiated a cold aura of incredible power. Most likely, even second-tier Daolords would end up having their truesouls frozen solid and then shattered, resulting in their deaths, unless they had particularly powerful life-preserving methods.

"Haha, intriguing. Two young fellows, come to play. Things are finally getting interesting." A deep, rumbling laugh rang out from other side as well, and Ning and Ninedust both hurriedly turned to look.

The dense mist split apart once more, and from the other side of the bank appeared a muscular, four-hooved equine of fire which began to walk towards Ning and Ninedust.

The deep blue dragon and the fiery equine looked at Ning and Ninedust with some curiosity.

"Darknorth, this place definitely holds some secrets." Ninedust grew rather nervous as he sent mentally, "These two are incredibly strong and pose an incredible threat. I'm worried that I won't be a match for them at all."

"We'll match them blow for blow." Ning remained quite calm. These two strange beasts brought a sense of pressure to him as well, but he still felt confident in his abilities to stay alive.

Ninedust suddenly called out loudly, "Greetings, seniors."

"Oh, how nice. A junior who understands the proper way to behave." The deep blue dragon lowered its giant draconic head to peer downwards at Ning and Ninedust. "After all these chaos cycles, the Aeonians have finally sent another Daolord over! But... you two don't look like Aeonians.

Have the Aeonians realized that they are outmatched and elected to ask outsiders for help?"

"The Aeonians truly are useless." The flaming equine said with a snicker, "They have this world all to themselves, but they haven't been able to produce so much as a single truly powerful expert. As far as Emperors go? They don't even have a Hegemon! As for Daolords, all of theirs are mediocre."

"Since the two of you are Daolords, we'll follow the same rules as always. If you can defeat the two of us, we won't bar your path," the deep blue sea dragon said.

"You only have to defeat the two of us." The flaming equine was quite eager as well.

Ning and Ninedust both were intrigued by this. They were starting to understand. "Seniors," Ning said, "Do we have to defeat you individually, or shall we fight in a group?"

"You two kids can come against us, one at a time." The sea dragon let out a chuckle. "Fight me first, then against the fiery guy over there. If you can defeat the two of us separately, you'll be allowed to do as you please."

"AWOOO! Stop sleeping! All of you, get over here!" The flaming equine lifted its head up and let out a mighty howl which echoed throughout every inch of this planet.

Whooooosh. The entire vast planet suddenly began to tremble and rumble as the two great seas on both sides began to shake.

One deep blue sea dragon after another began to fly out of the deep blue seas, while more and more flaming equines flew out of the sea of flames. They differed in size and strength, with the large ones having auras that were even more terrifying than the two in front of Ning. The smaller ones were a bit weaker.

Nearly a hundred of the sea dragons and the flaming equines ended up appearing. They all looked over to this area, watching rather excitedly.

"This is utterly terrifying." Ninedust was badly frightened by this. He

immediately sent to Ning, “There were actually this many creatures hidden within this planet? If they were all to attack in unison... I’m afraid that only Hegemons would be able to survive.”

“Yes.” Ning sensed the terrifying danger the two groups posed. These beasts were simply too strong; neither he nor Ninedust could possibly resist them.

To be surrounded and watched by so many of those beasts... Ning and Ninedust both felt a sense of great pressure.

“These are members of our race,” the deep blue sea dragon in front of Ning said. “Don’t worry. Since you two are merely Daolords, they will only stand off to one side and watch. If an Emperor came, they would have to defeat both of our races in order to proceed! As mere Daolords, beating the two of us will suffice. Otherwise, you can forget about leaving with any of the treasures on this planet.”

“Which of you two will be the first to attack?” The flaming equine was starting to grow impatient.

Ning and Ninedust both felt rather stunned. Ninedust sent mentally, “The Aeonians do not have any Hegemons. It seems as though they are not able to defeat these two races, and I can’t even imagine how long it would take before they are able to give birth to a Daolord capable of defeating these two beasts without assistance.”

“Yes. I’ll go first and see just how tough these beasts are,” Ning said.

“It’ll be up to you. I have no shot at all,” Ninedust said helplessly. His subconscious was screaming danger at him, ensuring that he understood that he was no match whatsoever for these two beasts.

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The two massive beasts standing at each end of the thin strip of land squinted at the tiny little dot in front of them. Far away, within the two vast seas, the two races of nearly two hundred terrifying beasts all watched with interest.

“I’ll go first,” Ning said aloud.

“Good.” The deep blue sea dragon grinned widely. “Come forward, young fellow.”

Ning instantly manifested three heads and six arms, bringing his six Northbow swords to the ready. Swoosh! Ning instantly charged into the skies, moving far faster than a hundred times the speed of light.

“Heeey. Pretty fast!” The sea dragon’s eyes lit up. It instantly and excitedly waved its right paw, sending it striking towards Ning at more than a hundred times the speed of light. This claw-strike emanated a bone-chilling cold that pierced towards Ning’s tiny little frame.

Ning moved in an almost ghostly manner. He merely had to gently rap the flat of his blade against the right claw to force it aside, then charged straight towards the sea dragon’s flank.

“This Daolord isn’t bad.”

“He’s pretty tough.”

“The Aeonian Daolords themselves are far too weak. I wonder where they managed to find such a formidable young fellow to help them out?” The two races of beasts watched from the distant seas with interest, commenting as the battle proceed.

“Break!” Ning stabbed straight towards the sea dragon’s flank, his Northbow sword immediately executing his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. A mist-formed sword tore through the skies, stabbing straight at the deep blue flank. The sea dragon didn’t just look as though it had been sculpted out of an enormous piece of ice, it actually WAS covered by layers of thick, dense ice.

Slash! The tip of the sword stabbed into the ice, just barely managing to leave behind a tiny little wound on the outermost layer of the ice. Moments later, cold energy flowed forwards and quickly restored the damage down.

Whooosh. The deep blue sea dragon’s vast body suddenly flew backwards, coiling like a whip then snapping forward through the skies as it caused a vast illusory wave to appear in the skies.

It was simply too fast and too massive. There was no chance for Ning to dodge at all. He immediately used his six Northbow swords to defend as the sea dragon slammed its massive bulk straight against Ning.

BOOM! It was like using a giant whip to swat a tiny mosquito. Ning felt an enormous amount of power spread throughout his entire body, sending him flying backwards uncontrollably. He smashed into the distant ground, creating a giant crevice that was more than a thousand kilometers long.

“Eh? He didn’t die, did he?” The deep blue sea dragon hovered there in the skies, peering downwards with concern. Only when he could sense that Ning was still unharmed did he relax slightly.

Chapter 6: Understood

Ji Ning had already flown out of the long crevice and landed next to it. Naturally, he was completely unharmed; after spending hundreds of millions of years within the Sithe ruine inside the Stone Hellephant Wall, he had long ago trained his body to make it comparable to high-grade Eternal weapons. On top of that, he also had his Hegemon armor! Even if he didn't use sword-arts to block, he'd still be able to take this hit. When you factored in how powerful his defensive sword-arts were... the only reason he had even been sent flying was because the sea dragon had snapped its body like a whip, generating such enormous momentum that he couldn't help but fly backwards.

"Such power." Ning raised his head to stare seriously at the deep blue sea dragon in the skies.

"Haha, I'm glad you didn't die. I was afraid I would've beaten you to death with a single whap. That would've been boring." The sea dragon coiling in the air peered downwards at Ning, its voice booming.

"Darknorth, can you beat it?" Ninedust asked mentally.

Ning had a solemn look on his face. "It'll be a bit difficult. It's not so bad when it stays still, but when it starts to move its entire body strikes like a supple, long whip. Its movements are extremely unpredictable, and I wasn't able to dodge in time. That's why I was knocked flying." He had reached the fourth stage of his Shadowless stance long ago, and his movements were extremely unpredictable... but he had still been knocked flying by the sea dragon. Ning understood that this meant the sea dragon's movements were every bit as ghostly and unpredictable as his own!

"Grow!" Ning roared loudly. Whoosh! Ning's divine body began to dramatically grow in size, towering to become a titanic mountain-sized giant with three heads and six arms. Each of the six Northbow swords in his hands transformed to become utterly massive as well.

"Oh, he grew bigger?" The sea dragon watched curiously.

"We're too close to each other at my normal size; I don't have enough

time to dodge.” Ning’s voice boomed out, “My only choice is to grow bigger and stay a good distance away from you; that way, I might be able to avoid some attacks.”

The farther away they were from each other, the more space Ning would have to maneuver in.

“You know, young fellow, I’m most confident in my agility and in my unpredictability. Come, let’s dance again.” The sea dragon suddenly charged downwards. Whoosh! Its sinuous body lashed out like a whip, leaving behind an arc in the skies as it charged straight towards Ning.

Ning hurriedly moved backwards while using one of his mist-formed swords in a ghostly block. Clank! The sword-light clashed against the sea dragon’s claws.

Whoosh! The sea dragon’s tail came lashing towards Ning with shadowy speed! Space itself seemed to be torn apart by this strike, which was so fast as to render Ning speechless.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Ning hurriedly retreated while executing his Omega Sword Dao – Soleheart. Fortunately, he himself was also quite unpredictably agile and he also moved more than a hundred times faster than the speed of light.

The sea dragon let out a mighty roar as it coiled around itself. Its tail swept outwards as its upper body dove downwards, sending its fierce draconic claws straight towards Ning.

Boom! Boom! Fortunately, Ning had three heads and six arms, allowing him to just barely block this draconic strike. However, the sea dragon suddenly opened its massive draconic maws and then bit down towards Ning! Ning hurriedly retreated backwards to avoid this terrifying bite. Boom! The sea dragon charged headfirst-towards Ning, delivering a headbutt against the fleeing Ning and sending him flying even further backwards. He only came to a halt after flying a great distance, at which point Ning flew back to the field of battle.

“Too fast and too slippery.” Ning’s head was starting to hurt. The sea dragon’s entire body was covered with extremely thick layers of frozen ice,

which meant that there were no weaknesses to exploit at all. Every single part of its body could be used as a weapon! It was also incredibly fast and slippery, capable of unleashing consecutive combination attacks without pause.

“I’ve always relied on my speed and unpredictable attacks to achieve victory, but this sea dragon just so happens to be superior to me in these areas...” Ning frowned. “It seems my only choice is to break through using raw power. I suppose I’ll give it a try.”

Break through with overwhelming, raw power in a frontal strike! It didn’t matter how unpredictable the enemy’s attacks were if you could just barrel straight forwards with an unstoppable strike; so long as the attack landed, the enemy would be defeated!

The reason why Ning had yet to use his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker was because of what had happened during his first clash against the deep blue sea dragon. His Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop had only been able to drill a tiny wound into the thick layers of ice covering the sea dragon’s body. Ning had gotten a vague sense of how terrifyingly tough that armor of ice was, and thus he didn’t feel confident in his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker and its chances.

However, he was out of options. He had to give it a try.

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“This kid is pretty fast, and his sword-arts are also quite ghostly. Although he’s at a disadvantage, at least he’s able to put up a good fight.”

“It’s quite rare for us to encounter such a formidable Daolord.”

“Interesting, interesting.”

“It seems as though his protective divine ability is also quite formidable. He has yet to take any injuries at all.”

The nearly two hundred beasts who were watching in the two vast seas were all quite interested in this battle, and they chatted while watching.

“Darknorth’s been shut down.” Ninedust was starting to grow anxious.

“We actually ran into something that has even weirder attacks than him and which is just as fast as him.”

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“Again!” Ning bellowed. This time, his demeanor was completely different. He put away his other five Northbow swords, leaving just one sword behind. All six of his arms tightly clenched the sole remaining sword.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning began to run across the ground. His speed wasn’t that fast, less than a hundred times the speed of light, but as he ran his aura seemed to grow increasingly powerful. The most important aspect to the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker lay in the accumulation of power! Only after accumulating enough power could you then unleash it in a terrifying blow; only then could Ning unleash his true, most powerful strike.

“Eh?” The airborne sea dragon was slightly startled upon seeing this, then grew excited: “His aura seems to have become quite savage! But I’ll have to test it out myself to see just how strong he is. I hope he doesn’t disappoint.” The sea dragon let out an excited roar, then swooped downwards and charged straight towards Ning. It didn’t move to dodge, nor did it feel the need to.

Ning continued to bound forwards, his momentum and aura having reached an apex. Riiiiip! The sea dragon struck out with a pair of draconic claws, tearing downwards through the sky at Ning.

“Now... BREAK for me!” Ning roared loudly. All six of his hands were clenched tightly around his sword as he raised it up high, pouring more and more energy into it. It had already transformed into a thick, blurry pillar of mist-formed sword energy of incredible weight and density. Ning then delivered a furious downwards chop, causing the thick pillar of mist to suddenly explode! It was like the bursting of a volcano, with all of his power and might exploding forth from the strike.

The stately thick pillar of mist-formed sword energy seemed to have suddenly exploded and transformed into a dazzling star that had gone

supernova. All of its power was unleashed in an instant as it smashed directly against the draconic claws.

BOOOOM! A terrifying shockwave of force blasted out, causing Ning to be knocked backwards. This time, he was sent flying even faster than before!

The sea dragon had previously been quite excited, but the terrifying collision caused even its body to tremble. The mighty shockwave swept across its entire body, flipping it upside down and sending it flying backwards as well. Moments later, a series of cracking sounds could be heard as the ice over its body began to splinter and crack, making it look almost like a turtle shell. Some of the shattered pieces of ice actually began to fall off of it!

Alas, the creature quickly righted itself and brought itself to a halt in the skies. Its body had previously glistened beautifully, but it was now covered with countless ugly cracks and scars that spanned its entire body. However, a dense aura of cold energy quickly spread out to cover its body, causing the cracks and tears to quickly heal. In less time than was needed to take a single breath, the many ugly wounds had been completely healed.

“It healed that fast?” The spectating Ninedust was speechless. “This is going to be trouble.”

“Haha, again!” Ning had been blown backwards, but he charged straight forwards with an indomitable aura, roaring with high-spirited laughter.

He still held just a single sword in his six arms, and like Pangu cleaving apart Heaven from Earth he once more delivered a furious frontal chop with endless might!

“Excellent, excellent! It’s been so long since I’ve had this much fun.” The deep blue sea dragon charged forwards as well. This time, it lashed out with its massive tail in a swatting blow at Ning, smashing it straight against Ning’s sword. BOOM! The two were once more sent flying backwards. This time, the sea dragon was prepared and thus it suffered slightly fewer wounds and cracks to its body. The ones that did appear

once more healed quite quickly.

“Again.”

“Yes, again!”

Ning was filled with the desire to do battle. He charged forwards repeatedly, using raw, overwhelming force to clash straight against the deep blue sea dragon. The sea dragon started off quite excited by this fight, but it quickly grew resigned and bored... it didn't want to fight head-on against Ning, but it simply had no way to avoid Ning's straightforward and dominating Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. Ning was far less agile than it was, after all.

“I want to see just how long your divine power and Immortal energy will be able to hold on for!” The deep blue sea dragon started to grow angry, and it rammed straight against Ning time and time again.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The two clashed repeatedly, causing the two groups of beasts watching from the two seas to become rather puzzled.

“What's going on with that Daolord? He knows there's no way to win like this, so why is he doing this?”

“It does seem rather odd.”

“He won't be able to win like this. He won't be able to win unless he can smash open the frozen ice with a single blow.”

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Ning was no fool, of course. However, when he had first used his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker to clash head-on against the deep blue sea dragon, the furious yet exhilarating feelings had caused him to gain a spark of insight! He began to gain more and more insights, which was why he continued to furiously unleash his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker against the sea dragon, hoping to be able to finally catapult his Heavenbreaker stance to the fourth stage.

BOOM! With the ninety-eighth collision, Ning's face lit up with excitement as he flew backwards. “I understand now! I finally

understand!"

Chapter 7: Autarch's Decree

Ji Ning finally saw the light, and his Heavenbreaker stance broke through to the fourth stance. Now... his Blood Drop stance, Shadowless stance, Heavenbreaker stance, Yin-Yang stance, and Soleheart stance had all broken through to the fourth stage. These five stances were linked together and reinforced each other, giving Ning a sense of perfection and completeness. However... he knew that this sense of perfection wasn't the true apex! Only when he perfectly fused these five stances into his Omega Sword Dao - Stage Four would they undergo a qualitative breakthrough.

"I'm just one step away... once I take that step, I'll be a Daolord of the Fourth Step! When that happens, my only consideration shall be whether or not I should engage in the Daomerge." Ning was filled with excitement.

The Daomerge? He felt as though his chances were slim; he didn't dare put too much hope into that! But once he became a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he'd become dramatically more powerful. As his understanding of the [Heartsword] art slowly improved, he'd probably surpass the level of the Archons of the Sacred Cities and close in on the Hegemon level! Emperor Heartsword had been inferior to Ning in his mastery of the Dao of the Sword, but thanks to his full mastery of all fifteen stances of the [Heartsword] art he had been extremely close to the Hegemon level.

Ning had a much greater grasp of the Dao of the Sword, and he had also reached an extremely high level in the [Heartsword] art; it was entirely possible for him to one day become equal to Hegemons in power!

With that level of power, he would be able to go off adventuring... and perhaps he might be able to find something that he could use to convince an Autarch to reverse the flows of spacetime and revive Yu Wei.

"Once I take that final step and become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, I'll go and challenge the Azureflower Estate once more! The destiny which awaits me there is definitely an extraordinary one." Ning eagerly anticipated the coming of that day... but everything had to wait for him to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step first! Although he had already

reached the fourth stage in all five of his stances, he had to merge them together into his final Omega Sword Dao.

How long would this step take? It could be as fast as the next instant... but could also be as slow as a chaos cycle or even a hundred chaos cycles!

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“Eh?” The airborne sea dragon peered downwards at the white-robed youth, realizing that the youth had come to a halt. It let out a rumbling shout, “Kid, you tired from all the fighting? You were fighting me head-on like crazy. I imagine you must’ve used up a great deal of your divine power and Immortal energy.”

The distant Ning smiled slightly. “Let’s do it again. If you can still withstand my strike, I’ll stop the fight.” His voice echoed throughout the air.

“Darknorth... did he...?” The distant Ninedust was truly shocked as he watched this.

“Why is this young fellow suddenly saying something so bold?”

“Did he come up with a way to gain victory?”

“Let’s see just what he’s planning.”

The two races of beasts in the two seas watched curiously from afar. They wanted to see just what technique Daolord Darknorth would use in this final clash.

Boom! Ning suddenly moved with incomparable savagery, transforming into a streak of light that shot straight towards the distant deep blue sea dragon. The three-headed, six-armed Ning once more wrapped all six hands around the hilt of the Northbow sword, filling it with an aura of overwhelming might as he transformed it into a dominating mist-formed sword.

“This technique again?”

“Isn’t that what he used previously?”

Everyone was puzzled. Even the sea dragon fighting against Ning was

confused, but it didn't hesitate; it let out an enraged howl and charged forwards. Ning's own agility and sword-arts made it hard for it to dodge, and so it chose to meet the attack head-on.

Whoosh! As the sea dragon charged towards Ning, it suddenly swept out with its tail, using it to lash out at Ning like an enormous long whip. Crack!

Ning suddenly let out an earth-shaking howl! The ethereal, mist-formed sword in his hand suddenly exploded with power, instantly becoming millions of times brighter as it exploded against the sea dragon's tail.

BOOM!

As soon as the sea dragon collided against Ning's sword, it immediately knew that something was wrong! The power of the Omega Sword Dao - Heavenbreaker was only evident in the very last instant, when it released its stored power. A slumbering volcano was very ordinary and unremarkable; one could only understand how truly terrifying it was in the moment of its explosion. The sea dragon could sense a terrifying surge of power instantly spread out to cover his entire body.

Bang! Its entire icy carapace was only able to withstand the force for a brief instant. A heartbeat later, the entire carapace shattered apart. No... more than just the icy carapace, the body inside cracked apart as well! The entire deep blue sea dragon shattered apart like a piece of ice, instantly breaking apart into countless little pieces.

As for Ning, he stumbled just thirty meters backwards. He stared intently at the shattered bits of eyes, watching as a stream of energy flew out from the freezing ice region and gathered into a blurry figure which looked much like that of the sea dragon. The illusory sea dragon looked at Ning, then let out a laugh: "My frozen form was built up over the course of countless years, but you broke it apart just like that? Impressive, impressive. You've won!"

Ning let out a sigh of relief. He watched as the illusory sea dragon continued to draw upon the icy energy of the area, slowly rebuilding its body. However, the full recovery process would take at least ten thousand

years. The creature continued, “Still... even though that stance of yours was useful against me, it’ll be useless against the fiery fellow over there. My forte lay in agility and unpredictability, but the fiery fellow’s skills lie in overwhelmingly fierce attacks.”

After speaking, the creature retreated into the deep blue seas, flying into it and then hovering above its surface. A large amount of watery energy swirled around its body, which it constantly drew upon and absorbed.

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“Won.”

“He actually won.”

“That sword-strike was quite ferocious. He smashed the frozen form apart.” The hundreds of spectator beasts were all quite surprised.

Ninedust was extremely excited. He flew straight towards Ning: “Darknorth, Darknorth, you won! Haha! These two beasts should be two matching pairs; one emanates an aura of endless cold, the other is formed from endless flames. They should be on par with each other in power! Since you were able to beat one, you should be able to beat the second one as well. I can already see your victory!”

“We can’t get careless.” Ning stared at the distant flaming equine, then said in a low voice, “They might be on par with each other, but one might be much easier to defeat than the other.”

For example, defeating Ning would be extremely difficult. Anyone skilled in defense or who had extremely formidable protective divine abilities would all be quite difficult to defeat. Given that the sea dragon came first and the flaming equine was the second challenge, it seemed likely that in some way, shape, or form, the flaming equine would be even tougher to deal with.

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“If you can defeat me, then our two races will no longer move to bar your path.” The flaming equine’s voice was deep and dominating. “But I’m not as easy to deal with as the frozen fellow; although those beasts have

extremely hard bodies that can be used as weapons, their bodies are too easily shattered. Excessive hardness can result in brittleness. To create bodies formed from frozen ice was a fool's choice to begin with."

"No, you fire beasts are the true fools." Instantly, one of the many spectating sea dragons in the air bellowed in disagreement: "Every part of our frozen bodies can be used as weapons. We only sent out one of the most common members of our race to spar against that young fellow. If our clan leader entered the fray, his sword wouldn't be able to leave as much as a mark behind on our leader's body!"

"Defeat is defeat." The flaming equine glanced sideways at the sea dragon, not even wanting to bother with him.

"You idiot."

"No, you guys are the idiots."

"You wanna start a fight? You wanna fight again?"

"Bitch, let's go!" The two races quickly began to squabble against each other. Both sides were boiling with the eagerness to do battle, a sight which stupefied both Ning and Ninedust.

What Ning and Ninedust didn't understand was that this planet had no other living beings, and so the two races which lived on it had nothing better than to do when bored than to battle against each other! They'd fight until the skies themselves turned dark and the world itself turned old. To them, fighting against each other was as normal as eating or drinking.

"Let's not be too hasty." An ancient voice rang out from one of the deep blue sea dragons in the skies. This sea dragon looked quite ordinary, but its aura was so reserved and stately that Ning hadn't even noticed it earlier. The sea dragon continued, "The Autarch's decree was that we were to live here and prevent cultivators from entering that place! If you want to fight, you can fight later; we have business to finish first."

"Agreed. We have business to finish first." A similar order came from a stately flaming equine on the other side of the planet.

The two races quickly calmed down and fell silent. As for Ning and Ninedust, they were intrigued; the ‘Autarch’s decree’? It seemed as though this place had also been set up in accordance with an Autarch’s plans... but why had none of it been written down on the stone stele?

“Come, then.” The flaming equine stood in the air above that narrow strip of land, its body blazing with flames so hot that the air around it was bubbling.

“Let’s.” Ning instantly transformed into a streak of light as he shot over towards the flaming equine.

The flaming equine moved as well, its four hooves galloping across the air itself as it suddenly sped up. It immediately moved more than a hundred times the speed of light... and in fact, it was even faster than the sea dragon. Its flying speed was absolutely ferocious! It lowered its head slightly, pointing its horns straight at its foe.

BOOM! Ning once more used his most savage strike, the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. His sword shot out, smiting furiously upon the flaming equine’s skull! As for the equine, it didn’t dodge at all; it just continued its headlong charge.

An enormous explosion rang out! The flaming equine trembled slightly as it staggered more than three hundred meters backwards, while Ning was actually blasted more than a thousand kilometers away before Ning came to a halt. Ning was secretly shocked: “Just like the sea dragon said... this beast specializes in overwhelmingly ferocious attacks. It really is ferocious; it’s even stronger than my Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker! Perfect! Only foes like this are strong enough for me to temper my sword-arts.”

What he needed to do was to take that one final step and become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. To do that, he needed sufficient challenges to face!

Chapter 8: Daolord Coldsky

“Gwaaaaar!” The flaming equine’s entire body was covered in flames as it galloped across the skies towards Ji Ning with frenetic momentum.

BOOM! Ning transformed into a streak of light, clashing against the flaming equine time and time again in midair. Sometimes he fought it head-on, sometimes he used unpredictable movements, and sometimes he completely disappeared into thin air... but once he moved closer to the creature, he was forced to show himself by its blazing flames!

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This was an incredibly exciting battle. The shockwaves generated by the repeated collisions blasted out in every direction, causing Ninedust to repeatedly move backwards as he watched.

“Such power! Darknorth is growing stronger and stronger.” Ninedust was excited by what he saw.

“Interesting.”

“They’ve fought to a standstill?”

“The flame beast holds an advantage in power, while the kid holds an advantage in unpredictability. Still... based on what I can tell, this battle should be depleting quite a bit of the kid’s divine power and Immortal energy. Once a bit more time passes, it’ll be hard for the kid to stay in top fighting form, whereas his opponent can draw from the energy of the endless sea of flames. It’d be easy for him to stay in battle for ten years or even a hundred years without resting. If things proceed like this, the kid’s probably going to die.”

“Yes, if the young fellow wishes to win, he needs to win as soon as possible. The longer this drags out, the greater his chances of losing will be.” The two races of beasts watching from the sidelines all commented with interest.

One day... two days... three days... Ning continued to battle against the flaming equine in midair, the two landing on the ground every so often to

continue the battle there.

“He’s definitely going to lose.”

“Look! His sword-arts aren’t able to maintain that mist-form from before.”

“He probably has depleted too much divine power and Immortal energy. He’s unable to maintain it.”

“It’s been too long. He’s lost.” The majority of the watching beasts all came to this conclusion.

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The battle between Ning and the flaming equine lasted for an extremely long period of time. By the third day, Ning gave up on using the [Heartsword] art! This was because the [Heartsword] art allowed Ning to fight the flaming equine to a standstill... and Ning had quickly discovered the flaming equine’s flaws! Whenever Ning wished it, he would be able to quickly defeat the creature.

However... Ning’s greatest goal was to break through to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. What he needed was a good opponent to temper himself against! This was why, after the third day, he pretended to be exhausted and stopped using the [Heartsword] art. Without it strengthening him, his power instantly dropped by half! This caused him to immediately be at a disadvantage and be suppressed by the flaming equine.

“This is perfect. Now, I can truly test out my sword-arts. Mm... yes, I see many more flaws in my sword-arts that I previously had not discovered. I need to perfectly master and merge the mysteries of these five stances into a whole. Only then will my sword-arts be truly flawless and complete.”

Ning was being dominated and beaten down, but this only showed him more clearly the weaknesses in his sword-arts. His mind was now filled with many new insights... but these insights weren’t enough! He would need far more if he wished to merge his five stances into the fourth stage of the Omega Sword Dao and then become a Daolord of the Fourth Step.

In the blink of an eye, nineteen days had passed with Ning and the flaming equine locked in combat. This caused the many watching beasts to feel puzzled: “The kid’s actually been able to hang on for nineteen days?”

“That couldn’t have been easy. He’s clearly much weaker now, but he’s still been able to hold on... not bad at all.”

“This will end in defeat, but an honorable one.”

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Ning continued to dodge and stumble about while defending with his six swords. Suddenly, his movements changed as a sharp light flashed through his eyes. “Time to bring it to an end.”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sword-light once more formed into streams of mist as the power of his strikes increased twofold! With a boom, Ning’s strikes collided against the flaming equine, catching it off-guard and sending it stumbling.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Slash! Slash! Ning’s six swords suddenly disappeared without a trace, reappearing much closer to the equine when its flames forced them to manifest. The six swords were like a peacock unfurling its plumage. They were absolutely incandescent yet completely ghostly in their movements.

Although the flaming equine was quite valiant and doughty, Ning had used the Heavenbreaker stance and the Blood Drop stance to break through its guard, then used the Shadowless stance to quickly wrap his swords around its bodies. The divine swords transformed to become long and flexible, coiling around the flaming beast and quickly tying the entire thing up securely.

“Impossible.” The trussed flame beast had a look of disbelief on its face. “How could this have happened?”

It clearly recalled what had just happened. It had endured the Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop, Heavenbreaker, and Shadowless multiple times by now; those techniques were of no threat to it. How was it that this time,

it had been defeated?

In truth, if Ning had merely used those three stances by themselves, he wouldn't have been able to pose a threat to the creature at all. However, when he used all three together in a manner where they reinforced each other, he was able to capitalize on a weakness in the flaming equine's movements and thus capture and bind it.

An effective combination of attacks could cause one to become quite a bit more dangerous.

"Again! Let's do it again! I can't accept this outcome." The flaming equine was furiously struggling against its bonds, twisting and turning while it roared angrily, "You got lucky just now! I was over-confident. Let's fight again!"

"Hmph." When Ning saw the uncowed look on the flaming equine's face, Ning silently muttered to himself, "If I didn't want to use you to temper my sword-arts, I would've captured you on the very first day."

"A defeat is a defeat," an ancient voice rang out. The stately clan leader flew out from within the ranks of the hundred or so flaming equines.

"Clan leader." The tied-up equine was still rather unwilling to accept this outcome. "I-I..."

"Just look at yourself. You've been tied up like a baby." The flaming equine turned to look at Ning. "This young fellow's sword-arts can switch between being supremely hard and supremely soft, between being fast and being slow, and is defensively impenetrable. It truly has no weaknesses at all. As soon as he unleashed his full power, he instantly captured you. Although it was partially because of your own over-confidence, even if you were careful you still probably wouldn't have been able to hold out too long."

Ning was secretly startled. The clan leader really had good judgment. It was true that part of the reason why he had been able to instantly capture the flaming equine was because he hadn't used the [Heartsword] art during the past ten-plus days. His sudden usage of it and the corresponding increase in power had caught the flaming equine off-guard,

allowing him to catch it with ease. If his foe was prepared, Ning still would've been able to capture him, but it wouldn't have been nearly this easy.

“Alright.” The captured equine nodded submissively. The clan leader’s prestige was quite high and had a suppressive effect on it.

“Young fellow, you won. From this moment forth, our two clans will no longer stand in your path.” The flaming equine leader looked at Ning.

Ning waved his hand, retracting the Northbow swords which had been wrapped around the flaming equine and drawing them back into his hands.

“These two battles have benefited me tremendously,” Ning said with a respectful bow.

Whoosh. The similarly stately and reserved leader of the sea dragons flew out of deep blue sea and towards Ning. It landed next to Ning, then let out a laugh: “Hah! It has been a very, very long time since a Daolord has passed the trials.”

“When was the last time a Daolord passed the trials?” Ning asked curiously.

“Very long ago, more than nine hundred thousand chaos cycles ago.” The sea dragon leader peered at Ning. “I think his name was Daolord Coldsky.”

“Coldsky?” Ning was puzzled.

“Daolord Coldsky? Who?” Ninedust was puzzled as well.

Anyone capable of passing this trial had to be just as strong as the current Ning. By all rights, he should’ve been an incredibly famous figure. Even though nearly a million chaos cycles had gone by and very few would’ve remembered him, people like Ning and Ninedust who had access to many historical records and secrets should’ve heard of him. They knew all of the most dazzling and most talented Daolords in history. Neither, however, had ever heard of an incredibly talented Daolord by the name of Daolord Coldsky.

“Back then, Daolord Coldsky said that he belonged to a different branch of the Aeonian race. He had been invited here to help out the Flamedragon branch,” the sea dragon leader said.

“A different branch?” Ning and Ninedust were both shocked.

“Other realmverses also have Aeonians?” Ning was puzzled.

“The Aeonian race has quite an extraordinary background.” The sea dragon leader smiled. “The ones in the Flamedragon Realmverse represent nothing more than a single branch of that race. Otherwise, how could they possibly have acquired a treasure like this ‘Aeonian Kingdom’?”

Ning and Ninedust were both enlightened. Indeed, the Aeonian Kingdom was a place which not even Hegemons dared to trespass within. It really wasn’t a treasure which the local Aeonians, a race which merely had a few Eternal Emperors, would’ve been able to create on their own. Ning had always believed that the Aeonians must’ve acquired it somewhere when adventuring. Now, it seemed, it was actually created.

“Daolord Coldsky had already failed his Daomerge, but before his death he was invited to come here to the Flamedragon Realmverse. Ignoring the cost to his vitality, he consecutively defeated two of the younger members of our two races. By the time the battles concluded, his truesoul’s collapse had been hastened to the point where he only had less than a hundred thousand years to live.” The sea dragon leader shook its head and sighed. “The more monstrously talented a Daolord, the more difficult the Daomerge. A pity, what a pity.”

Ning felt mixed emotions in his heart. If he failed his Daomerge, he would probably do everything he could to help the Three Realms.

Once the Daomerge was failed, one’s truesoul would slowly crumble apart. If one actively avoided using divine power and Immortal energy, one might be able to live for a bit longer... but engaging in combat would result in hastening the truesoul’s collapse! The more times one fought, the more quickly one’s truesoul would decay and the shorter one’s lifespan would become. When the truesoul finally, truly collapsed... one would die.

Chapter 9: Omnidreddon Bloodfruit Tree

“The Flamedragon branch of the Aeonian race will generally send people once every million chaos cycles to harvest some fruit from this omnigeddon bloodfruit tree.” The sea dragon leader’s voice was quite calm: “That’s because every million chaos cycles, this omnigeddon bloodfruit tree will be filled with a complete harvest of fruit. They’ll either send their own Daolords or ask some extremely powerful Daolords to help out.”

Ji Ning and Ninedust both nodded. Generally speaking, every two or three ‘eras’ there would be a Daolord on par with the current Ning. Some would have techniques like the [Heartsword] art, some would have Universe treasures, some would have other special weapons. Daolord Dreamlore, for example, had a very unique ‘bloodblade’, while Ning had an incredibly powerful Hegemon armor which was on par with the bloodblade in might. However, the Hegemon armor was obviously meant for defense. Another good example would be the six lifeblood weapons which Ning wielded; all of them had been raised to incredibly high levels.

Powerful Eternal Emperors lived extremely long lives and generally were able to raise their lifeblood weapons to extremely high levels, but Daolords had short lives. It was generally very hard for them to upgrade their lifeblood weapons significantly... but every so often, there would be a freak like Ning. Ning’s Northbow swords were incredibly powerful weapons; by now, they made his Heavenbreaker stance and Blood Drop stance five times more powerful than normal! If the Daolord himself was also quite powerful, it was entirely possible for the Daolord to reach the same level as the Archons of the eight Sacred Cities.

“If my guess is correct... you weren’t invited here by the Aeonians, were you?” The sea dragon leader smiled.

“What?”

“They weren’t invited by the Aeonians?”

“How is this possible?” Quite a few of the airborne beasts were

astonished. Most of them had assumed that Ning and Ninedust had to have been invited here by the Aeonians.

Ning and Ninedust felt their hearts lurch.

“From the moment you arrived,” the flaming equine leader added, “I could tell that you know almost nothing about this place. If the Aeonians invited you here, you should be quite familiar with this place and its rules... but you didn’t even know the basics about the trials and its rules.”

Ning and Ninedust felt resigned. They really didn’t know anything about this place. Ninedust sent mentally, “Darknorth, if these beasts attack us I’ll lead you in an immediate escape.”

“Don’t worry, you two. We’re here on the Autarch’s orders to protect this place and will bar any Daolords or Emperors who seek to approach,” the sea dragon leader said with a laugh. “We won’t stop any who pass our trials. Whether you are an Aeonian or not is none of our business.”

“Don’t worry, if we wanted to kill you, we would’ve done so long ago.” The flaming equine leader could also tell that Ning and Ninedust both had misgivings.

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Ning and Ninedust were confident in their abilities. They were carrying the treasures they had acquired from the Sithe ruins, and they had the Autarch’s medallion on them; their chances of fleeing were quite good.

“As juniors, we naturally will believe your words, seniors. Dare I ask... is that fruit tree over there truly an omnigeddon bloodfruit tree?” Ning asked.

“Of course it is,” the flaming equine leader said.

“But... why does it seem different from the ones I’m aware of?” Ning was puzzled. “I’ve heard that omnigeddon bloodfruit trees are much smaller and only have three fruits at most.”

“This omnigeddon bloodfruit tree is a hundred times more precious than ordinary ones,” the flaming equine leader said. “Every single fruit is also

far more marvelous than the ones from ordinary trees in the outside world. Haha... words don't suffice. Once you harvest the fruit and give it a close examination, you will understand."

Ning and Ninedust were speechless. Moments later, Ning grew excited. A hundred times as valuable? A single true omnigeddon bloodfruit tree was a priceless treasure that even Hegemons would go crazy over! Something a hundred times more valuable... Ning estimated that it had to approach the value of Crimsonwave Temple in worth. Even if it wasn't quite that much, it wouldn't be too far off.

"This tree is probably worth more than the networth of most Hegemons, right?" Ning couldn't help but ask.

"Of course! The Aeonian race in the Flamedragon Realmverse treat this fruit tree as something more valuable than their very lives," the flaming equine leader said.

Ning immediately came to the decision that he not only was going to harvest the fruit, he was going to uproot this tree! He was going to uproot this mysterious, unique omnigeddon bloodfruit tree and take it away with him at all costs! This mysterious tree might be enough to ask an Autarch to revive his wife. His goal was within his sight; there was no way he wasn't going to give it his all.

"Darknorth, are you thinking of uprooting the tree to save your Dao-companion?" Ninedust sent mentally.

The fact that Ning wished to rescue his lover wasn't exactly a secret. When Ning had met the leaders of the six major organizations after exiting Crimsonwave Temple, he had already asked about the price needed to reverse the flows of spacetime and revive his beloved Dao-companion. Ninedust had been present and had heard everything.

"Yes. This omnigeddon bloodfruit tree sounds as though it is quite valuable; I should be able to use it to ask an Autarch to help out! I have to take this risk!" Ning sent mentally, "Let's keep this a secret for now. If I mention taking the tree away, these two races might move to stop us. I'm planning on uprooting it at the very end. After doing so, we'll leave right

away.”

“Alright, I’ll listen to you!” Ninedust felt happy for his friend. The omnigeddon bloodfruit tree might be quite valuable, but Ninedust really didn’t care that much about it.

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Ning and Ninedust began to walk towards the tree. The two clan leaders led the way in front of them, with the sea dragon leader rumbling, “We won’t move to stop Daolord Darknorth, but Daolord Ninedust, you haven’t passed our trials yet. We’ll only permit you to stand next to him and watch. You are forbidden from taking part, much less harvesting any of the fruit. If you dare to do so, don’t blame us from moving to exterminate you.”

“I understand,” Ninedust acknowledged. In his heart, he felt quite resigned... because his title was Daolord Redwater, not Daolord Ninedust! Alas, he didn’t want to argue over it. They were going to leave soon and most likely would never meet again. Why even bother?

Soon, Ning and Ninedust arrived before the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree. “Whoah.” Both of them felt quite stunned. The entire tree had to be over three million meters high, and its trunk was as thick as the pillars of heaven. As for its twisted branches, they were like sinuous dragons that were covered with glowing, vitality-filled leaves. And the fruits? It must be understood that the two of them were able to sense the rippling auras of the fruits from far away. Now that they were much closer, those ripples surged straight into their hearts and minds. Even their breathing was affected by it.

“What a fine treasure,” Ning said with a praiseful sigh.

“This is far more stunning than the fruit trees we saw in Crimsonwave Temple.” Ninedust sighed in amazement as well. The feeling this mysterious fruit tree gave him surpassed even the majestic aura of Hegemons!

“Only by combining all of those trees would you have something which surpassed this one. Of course it is stunning!” Ning’s heart was surging

with excitement.

The nearby sea dragon leader said, “The Aeonians have set up many layers of barriers around this tree. Do you have a technique to open those barriers up?”

Ning and Ninedust were startled. Ning waved his hand, sending a wave of Immortal energy out and causing the formerly invisible and hidden barriers to immediately light up. Countless runes flowed on the surfaces of those barriers, causing Ning’s face to tighten. They weren’t invited here by the Aeonians; they naturally had no method for opening it up.

“But they don’t seem to be too strong,” Ning suddenly realized with surprise. Based on what he just saw, he should be able to destroy these barriers within a short period of time with his sword-arts.

“Of course they aren’t. Only Daolords have come here, and so these were personally set up by the Daolords who did make it inside,” the sea dragon leader said. “They brought many formations and barriers, but unfortunately they are on automatic mode. No one is actively managing them, which weakens them even further.”

Both Ning and Ninedust nodded. Formations which were actively controlled would be far more powerful. Without a controller present, they would be set to automatic and would thus naturally be much weaker.

There was nothing the Aeonians could do. Were they supposed to send Daolords to guard this place? Daolords only lived for 108,000 chaos cycles at most! Send Emperors? Eternal Emperors had zero chance of passing the trials.

“Although they aren’t all that strong, there are quite a number of them. Based on what I know, the Aeonians have set up a total of over 80,000 formations here,” the sea dragon leader said. “If you know the technique for unlocking the barriers, you can go through with ease. If not, you’ll have to break through all 80,000+ barriers before you can move next to the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree.”

“If you can’t break through the formations, you won’t be able to harvest so much as a single fruit,” the flaming equine leader said with a laugh.

Both the clan leaders smiled as they looked at Ning. They wanted to see just what this young fellow would do.

“More than 80,000?” Ning’s face tightened. Just now, he was able to sense that the outermost formation was quite weak. He would probably be able to destroy it with his sword-arts, but... 80,000? How long would that take? If some of the inner barriers were tougher, things would be even more difficult.

Chapter 10: Uprooting the Tree

The nearby Ninedust sent mentally, "Darknorth, should we use our Hegemonic treasures?"

"No, we don't have that many of them to begin with. Once we use them up, we'll be out," Ji Ning refused mentally. "We're keeping those to keep ourselves alive at critical moments. I'll try a few things out first. Even if it takes me a million years or a hundred million years, that'll be better than wasting a Hegemonic treasure. Besides... even if we did use it, it wouldn't be of that much use to us!"

Ning knew that by now, he might be at a disadvantage when fighting against an actual Archon of the Sacred Cities but he was definitely on their overall level! His Omega Sword Dao - Heavenbreaker was capable of unleashing enormous power with a full-strength spike... and yet, it still probably wouldn't be able to burst open one of those barriers instantly. Although the Hegemonic treasures were formidable and on a higher level of power than Ning, and they would most likely be able to shatter through a number of barriers, it was likely that they would at most be able to shatter through just a thousand barriers with each go. Unfortunately, there were over 80,000 barriers here!

"Let me try first." Ning's body blurred as he transformed into his three-headed, six-armed form and drew his six Northbow swords. Ninedust stepped back to watch from the side; all he could do was watch and wait. There was nothing he could do to assist.

"Omega Sword Dao - Blood Drop!" A cold light flashed through Ning's eyes as he immediately executed his most penetrating attack.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Six streams of mist-formed energy consecutively stabbed against the exact same spot upon the barrier in front of Ning. The powerful piercing force instantly caused the outermost layer of formations to flicker with light as countless runes began to flow over its surface.

"Omega Sword Dao - Heavenbreaker!" Next, Ning switched to a different

stance. There were differences amongst barriers as well; some were extremely flexible and soft, making brute force useless and requiring penetrative power to break through. Others were extremely rigid and unyielding; in this case, the overwhelming power of the Heavenbreaker stance would be the most appropriate and effective. Some barriers were actually illusory!

This was very different from when he had to defeat the formations at Crimsonwave Temple. Those formations were there as part of a test! The formations here, however, had been set down by the Aeonians as a defensive measure to prevent others from stealing their treasures. They naturally poured everything they had into these formations.

“Haha, without anyone controlling these formations, they won’t be able to heal as quickly as I deplete their power. The end result will definitely be their destruction.” Ning quickly discovered a weakness in the formation, then immediately used his Blood Drop stance as the primary attack to break through it.

Just a single hour later, the barrier fell. Although it was able to automatically regenerate, it wasn’t able to keep up with the rate at which its power was being depleted. After breaking through the formation, Ning casually destroyed one of its formation-bases! If he didn’t do so, the formation would quickly regenerate and trap Ning inside of it.

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One formation after another. Some were actually linked together, making it very hard for Ning to break through them. He was actually forced to use his Immortal energy to control the Northbow swords in attacking different formations in different regions simultaneously.

.....

Break, break, break... one layer of barriers after another was breached by Ning’s attacks. Although the Aeonians had paid enormous prices to set up these barriers, they were weakened by the fact that they were unmanned.

Time slowly passed on. One year, two years, three years... ten years, a hundred years, a thousand years...

While breaking through the formations, Ning continuously worked on his sword-arts. He felt as though he was virtually sparring with these many generations of departed formations masters. Some of these formations had been set up by the Aeonians themselves, while others they had purchased from the outside. Every single formation was difficult to breach, and while doing so Ning gained more and more insights into his sword-arts.

"A pity that my [Heartsword] art has yet to make a breakthrough. It seems as though going from the tenth stance to the eleventh stance truly is difficult," Ning sighed.

Every single strike of his was reinforced by the [Heartsword] art, which showed itself as a mist-formed layer of sword energy. It must be remembered that when one truly trained in the [Heartsword] art, the eighth to tenth stances were considered part of the first stage. The eleventh and twelfth stances were part of the second stage, the thirteenth and fourteenth stances were part of the third stage, and the fifteenth stance was the final stage.

Ning was still stuck in the first stage, and breaking through to the second stage was very, very difficult. Although the three hundred-plus Hegemonic legacies he had gained included a few similar techniques which also involved fusing heartforce with divine power and Immortal energy, in the end Ning was an expert of the Dao of the Sword; studying through this Dao was the fastest solution, making the [Heartsword] art the most appropriate art for him. The others could at most be used as references to use.

After reviewing the other techniques, Ning understood that gaining true mastery of the [Heartsword] art was possible only through one way – true and utter devotion to this Dao!

However, knowing and doing are two completely separate concepts. He knew what he had to do, but he still was unable to make the necessary breakthroughs. If breaking through was that easy, Emperor Heartsword wouldn't have been the only person in all of history to have been able to truly master this [Heartsword] art.

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More than eighteen million years went by.

The six Northbow swords were hanging in the air, furiously stabbing downwards in an illusory manner. Finally, with a popping sound, the last barrier was broken through by Ning.

“Success.” The distant Ninedust revealed a delighted look.

“He was actually able to break through over 80,000 barriers with just sword-arts.” The two clan leaders were both rather startled. These formations encompassed every type of barrier possible, including bewildering and illusory ones. Thankfully, Ning was a Heartforce Cultivator and thus wouldn’t be misled by them. Otherwise, he probably wouldn’t have been able to resolve those formations.

The white-robed Ning just stood there, his six Northbow swords hanging in the air. The swords descended in unison, flying back into the sheath on his back.

“Whew.” Ning let out a sigh of relief. He could sense that the past eighteen million years of formation-breaking had been a form of tempering for his sword-arts. He now had gained quite a few new insights into them.

“But I still have no clue as to how I am going to reach the fourth stage with the Omega Sword Dao. Becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step truly is difficult,” Ning sighed to himself. He really didn’t have much hope; all he could do was to continuously advance. Sooner or later, he would break through.

“My young friend Darknorth, these fruits are all quite extraordinary. They are far more valuable than ordinary omnigeddon bloodfruits,” the sea dragon leader said.

Ning turned to glance at it. The two clan leaders were both staring at Ning, as were the nearly two hundred beasts off in the distance. To them, the past eighteen million years had been nothing at all.

Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance. Both of them knew what had to

be done.

“Be careful,” Ninedust sent mentally.

“Don’t worry,” Ning replied mentally.

Boom! Ning’s body blurred as it suddenly expanded dramatically in size. He instantly became the size of a towering mountain that was three million meters tall, the same height as the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree itself.

“You grew pretty big,” the flaming equine leader said with a laugh.

“It makes harvesting easier.” Ning reached out with his hand, easily plucking one of the flame-colored fruits at the very crown of the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, then putting it away.

There were some fruits which could only be harvested in certain ways; for example, there were certain fruits which would vanish when touched by the hand. The omnigeddon bloodfruit, however, could only grow if they underwent ten thousand tribulations during their growing process! It was fine to harvest them by hand; they weren’t delicate at all.

Soon, the thirty-six fruits growing throughout the tree were completely harvested. Ning lowered his head to harvest the final fruit located at the base of the tree. He pulled the fruit into his estate-world with a thought, then reached out with both hands to grasp the trunk of the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree. He immediately sent out his divine power to cover every inch of the tree, protecting its roots and branches.

“Get up.” Ning exerted his power, allowing his full might to be unleashed. Boom! In the end, the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree was nothing more than a tree; the Azureflower Estate world’s fruit trees had been warded by the master of the estate, which was why Ning was unable to damage them. In fact, he had been restricted to harvesting just a single fruit. The omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, however, was ‘only’ protected by those 80,000+ barriers. By now, Ning had long since destroyed those barriers, and without them blocking his path he was able to easily harvest all of the fruit from the tree.

Whoosh! The entire massive omnigeddon bloodfruit tree was uprooted from the earthy ground. Countless roots began to rise up out of the earth, but the layer of divine power covering the tree ensured that it was completely undamaged.

“Ah?”

“This...”

“He’s...” the two clan leaders and all of the spectating beasts stared in amazement at this sight. The massive tree had just been uprooted by the similarly massive Ji Ning, who moved so fast that they weren’t even able to react in time.

“In you go.” With but a thought, Ning easily drew the uprooted omnigeddon bloodfruit tree into his estate-world.

“Ah?!” After putting away the tree, Ning had been feeling quite excited and planning to flee alongside Ninedust. In fact, Ninedust had already flown towards him like a streak of light... but the look on Ning’s face had changed.

Boom! After he uprooted the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, an enormous crevice had revealed itself underneath him. This enormous crevice was extremely deep, and at the very bottom of it there was a small pool of red liquid! This small pool of what looked like congealed blood was also thirty thousand meters in size! It rolled about like a miniature red sun.

Previously, the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree had been blocking it out, with Ning not having sensed its aura at all. Now that Ning had already uprooted the tree, he could sense a stately and ancient power instantly emanate outwards.

Chapter 11: Autarch's Blood

Ji Ning felt as though he was an ant who was facing the vast, starry night sky. Ning instantly turned pale, finding it hard to breathe as that aura of power swept outwards. It was simply terrifying. The aura of that glob of blood... it vastly surpassed the auras of any of the Hegemons Ning had met thus far! Although Hegemons had incredible auras, they couldn't even compare to the blood-red 'sun' that was glowing before him.

At Ning's current level of power, he was strong enough to smile and jest in the presence of Hegemons. But when faced with this pool of red blood, he felt utter terror from every fiber of his very being!

"What is that?!" Ninedust came charging over. He had been planning to take Ning away and flee, but he was instantly dazed when he saw that large pool of blood-red liquid, roughly thirty thousand meters in size.

"Darknorth, my young friend... it is useless for you to take away that omnigeddon bloodfruit tree." The sea dragon leader began to laugh. "The reason why that tree was so marvelous was all due to this drop of blood."

Ning and Ninedust stood next to each other. They could leave this world whenever they wished, and so they were in no haste to flee just yet.

"I uprooted the bloodfruit tree. Don't you care?" Ning asked.

"Why should we care?" The sea dragon leader laughed, "Long ago, this world didn't even have the bloodfruit tree in it. For you to uproot it does nothing to us at all."

"If this world originally didn't have a bloodfruit tree in it... where did it come from?" The nearby Ninedust asked, "And... did you just say that this giant pool of liquid is a drop of blood?"

"Yes, a drop of blood. This is a drop of blood which Autarch Bolin created after pouring tremendous amounts of work and essence into it, and it is filled with boundless mysteries," the sea dragon leader said.

"An Autarch's blood?" Ning and Ninedust were enlightened. This wasn't just a random drop of blood from Autarch Bolin; it was something which

Autarch Bolin had spent tremendous effort in refining. No wonder it was so terrifying!

“Long, long ago, Autarch Bolin left behind this drop of blood. We have been here on the Autarch’s orders, and we are to prevent all cultivators from reaching it. Daolords, Emperors... everyone must pass the trials before gaining access to this drop of blood,” the sea dragon leader said. “Later on, the Aeonians discovered this place and came here.”

“They realized that the Autarch’s blood was simply too powerful! Thus, they came up with a way to graft the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, a tree with tremendously strong vital energy, on top of it. The tree naturally rooted itself around the Autarch’s blood, and over the course of many years it began to slowly evolve and transform before it finally managed to draw some of the essence from the blood.”

“After absorbing some of the Autarch’s blood, it began to grow larger and larger while giving birth to more and more fruit. Now, it has finally reached a size of three million kilometers and can give birth to a crop of thirty-six fruit at a time,” the sea dragon leader said. “Every single fruit is far more special than ordinary omnigeddon bloodfruit, because they were grown from an Autarch’s blood.”

“This tree has spent more than thirty million chaos cycles absorbing the blood and has already transformed. It shall always produce thirty-six fruits with each harvest. However, now that you have uprooted it, it no longer has access to the Autarch’s blood and so the fruit it produces shall most likely be nothing more than ordinary omnigeddon bloodfruits. That makes the value of this tree much lower than before.”

Ning’s face tightened. True. Ordinary omnigeddon bloodfruit trees produced three fruits per harvest, while this one produced thirty-six! This made it comparable to twelve ‘ordinary’ bloodfruit trees. However, the fruit only possessed miraculous properties due to having absorbed blood from the Autarch. That was the reason why the tree could be described as having a hundred times the value of an ordinary tree!

“Just ten or so times?” Ning knew that he couldn’t be too greedy, but he

still felt rather disappointed. This sort of treasure was not nearly enough to ask an Autarch to help out.

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The sea dragon leader suddenly said, “The Autarch said that if one day, someone arrives who is capable of taking away this drop of blood, our two races shall regain our freedom. Darknorth, my young friend, you can try for yourself whether or not you can take the Autarch’s blood away.”

“Yes, if you can take it away, we shall regain our freedom.” The flaming equine leader grew excited as well, as did the hundreds of beasts within the world. Life here was simply too boring. Many of them had been born here, but the oldest ones had been sent here by Autarch Bolin himself. They knew just how lively the outside world was, whereas this place was incredibly dull and lonely.

“Take it away?” Ning and Ninedust were intrigued.

“It was created by the Autarch, who poured all of his effort into its creation. It is incomparably precious, far more than a hundred times more valuable than the tree you just uprooted. Most likely, even other Autarchs would very much desire to acquire this drop of blood and learn some of Autarch Bolin’s secrets from it.” The sea dragon leader continued to describe how valuable this drop of blood was, causing Ning to feel even more eager.

“Darknorth, give it a shot.” Ninedust looked at Ning and sent mentally, “You’d definitely be able to revive your Dao-companion if you acquire this drop of special Autarch’s blood.”

“I’ll give it a shot.” Ning didn’t hesitate at all, immediately flying into that enormous crevice. As he moved closer to it, he saw that the round pool of blood was beginning to swivel and emanate auras of increasing power. Ning had to clamp down upon his fear.

Although he couldn’t prevent himself from feeling terrified, he didn’t feel any sense of danger at all. This meant that this blood drop wouldn’t cause any harm to him. Autarch Bolin had left it behind for future generations of cultivators to benefit from, not die from.

Whoosh. Ning exerted his will, causing a divine power clone to appear next to the pool. The clone reached out with its right hand to touch the giant pool of blood. Ning wanted to be careful; this way, he would at most lose a bit of his divine power rather than his own life.

“Eh?” The drop of blood was incredibly cold, but it didn’t cause Ning’s clone any harm at all. “Arise.” The divine power clone tested out applying a bit of power to it.

Rumble... the drop of blood immediately began to shake and shudder. Silken lines began to appear all across this entire vast planet, with all of the lines converging upon the drop of blood. Ning’s divine clone was completely unable to move it at all.

“Arise!” Seeing this, Ning moved his true body over to the pool. He manifested three heads and six arms, then reached out with all six arms while using his Hegemon armor to cover and protect his hands as they delved into the pool of blood.

Ning pulled, hard. Boom! It was like an ant trying to shake a tree; the countless lines across the world connecting to this blood drop fought against him. If Ning wanted to move this blood drop, he would have to be able to overcome the might of this entire planet.

“Lift it up! Move it away!” The two clan leaders and the hundreds of beasts all watched eagerly. The day this drop of blood was taken would be the day they completed their responsibility to test the cultivators who came to this place. Only then would they be able to leave.

“Arise. Arise. Arise!” Ning did his utmost, but there was no way he could overcome the full power of this entire planet. This was an estate-world which had been created by an Autarch, after all; it was incredibly stable and not something which the likes of him could shake.

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Inside the Aeonian Kingdom. There was a beautiful, ancient palace here which served as the central temple for the entire kingdom.

A handsome youth was seated atop the royal throne within the temple,

dressed in elegant black robes. His aura was awe-inspiring and remote. He was the true supreme leader of the Aeonian race... Emperor Anchen. He had been protecting this place since time out of mind, because this temple was connected to the five most important ancestral grounds of the Aeonian race. Every single one of the five was extremely important... but of course, the most important was the 'first ancestral ground'. This was because it had been left behind by Autarch Bolin himself.

Rumble... suddenly, a tremor swept through the palace. Emperor Anchen was connected to all five ancestral grounds as their protector; he naturally noticed it and immediately turned pale. "The first ancestral ground! Its shaking!?" This was a world which had been created by Autarch Bolin, and the Aeonians knew it well; the only thing which could cause that entire world to shake was if someone was acting against the Autarch's blood, the most important treasure of all.

"Emperor Islehide, Emperor Duug, there may be invaders within the first ancestral ground. Come right away!" Emperor Anchen sent frantically.

Just a few seconds later... swoosh! Swoosh! Two figures simultaneously appeared. One was the handsome, red-haired Emperor Islehide; the other was the tall, skinny, and pale-faced Emperor Duug. The two had been shocked by what they had just heard and had immediately hastened over.

These three were the three most powerful Emperors of the Aeonian race here in the 'Endless Territories'.

"There are invaders in the first ancestral ground?" Emperor Islehide and Emperor Duug were both anxious and filled with murderous intent.

"Yes, go in right away," Emperor Anchen shouted.

"Let's go."

"Let's go." The bodies of the three Emperors began to blaze with flames. These flames were generated by the igniting of the Aeonian blood. To open the link to the first ancestral ground was extremely difficult; an enormous price would have to first be paid. However, now that something strange was going on inside they could no longer afford to worry about it.

Chapter 12: Devastating Rage

The three most powerful Emperors of the Aeonian race were all covered in blazing flames which began to reach out and connect to each other, slowly forming a strange diagram of a giant claw-shaped hand. This looked like the technique which Autarch Bolin had left behind in that beastworld.

Rumble. The flames from the ignited Aeonian blood instantly reached out to cover all three Emperors. Swoosh! They were teleported straight into the estate-world.

“Let’s move as fast as we can.” The three Emperors stared at the void around them, then turned to look at the astral river. They knew that they had already arrived, and Emperor Anchen shouted anxiously, “If we’re late, things will be even more difficult.”

“Let’s go.” Whoosh! Emperor Anchen generated a dimensional wave and led the other two Emperors with him as he instantly vanished.

This world was extremely stable; not even Hegemons would be able to forcibly tear through spacetime, much less them! However, mere dimensional teleportation was much simpler, as it was merely an evasion-art which rode dimensional waves across fairly short distances.

“There we are.” After the third dimensional wave, they appeared in the skies above that enormous, strange planet within the astral river.

“No...!” Emperor Islehide’s face instantly turned pale, and his scarlet eyes instantly turned blood-red. “The tree! Our omnigeddon bloodfruit tree has vanished!”

Emperor Anchen and Emperor Duug stared as well. They saw that off in the distance, there were ripples of energy spreading outwards and pushing aside the surrounding mist. The three of them were able to see that nothing more than a giant crater was left where the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree had been, and within the crater was a giant figure which was holding onto the Autarch’s blood and seeking to take it away.

“Not only did he take away our omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, he also wants to take away the Autarch’s blood?” Emperor Anchen was so enraged that he ground his teeth to the point of shattering.

“That’s Daolord Darknorth and the Ninedust Sectlord!” Emperor Islehide immediately recognized that Ji Ning was the one holding onto the Autarch’s blood, while the figure next to the crater was that of Ninedust. Emperor Islehide had met the two of them after the Waveshift Realm adventure, and he had even purchased some fruit from Ning. Now, however, they had become mortal enemies!

“These two are nothing more than Daolords... yet they dare to try and steal one of the foundations of our Aeonian race?” Emperor Anchen only grew even angrier. “Kill!”

“Kill them both,” Emperor Duug growled as well.

“Kill.” Emperor Islehide felt just as murderous as the others. They held these two Daolords in no regard at all. They were the three most powerful Emperors of the Aeonian race! They normally viewed Daolords as young children; they were so powerful that eating Daolords was of very little help to them. Weaker Emperors like Melobo, however, did like to eat the Daolords of the Dao Alliance, as did the other Daolords of the Aeonian race. This was why the Dao Alliance and the Aeonians were mortal enemies.

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Ning had transformed to become utterly titanic, and his six arms had reached out to grab the drop of Autarch’s blood as he sought to seize it. With each attempt, he saw those countless connecting lines appear throughout this entire world.

“These threads?” Ning stared at them carefully. He wanted to try and discern just how this drop of Autarch’s blood was connected to the rest of the world and how he could separate them. If he could come up with a way to sever the connection, it would be much easier for him to take away that drop of Autarch’s blood.

Ning had spent over 10 million years breaking through those 80,000+

formations. He had already grown accustomed to analyzing and dissecting his problems.

“The Aeonians!” Ninedust let out a startled cry from the skies above Ning.

Ning was startled upon hearing this. He turned his head, only to see three figures charging through the skies towards him with looks of absolute murder on their faces. Ning immediately recognized one of the three as Emperor Islehide, who had negotiated with him previously. Although he had never met the other two before, he had learned of them long ago and knew them to be extremely powerful Emperors of the Aeonian race named Emperor Anchen and Emperor Duug.

Emperor Islehide, Emperor Anchen, and Emperor Duug. These three were all comparable to the eight Archons of the Sacred Cities. But of course, much like ‘first-tier’ Daolords there were differences in power within this general stratum and amongst these three Aeonian Emperors.

Different weapons, different secret arts, different ultimate attacks... in short, there were many things that could cause a difference in power. Thanks to their Aeonian bloodlines, all three of these Aeonian Emperors were extremely strong. The youthful-looking black-robed Emperor Anchen was the strongest of the three, the most powerful member of the Aeonian race! Supposedly, his techniques were incredibly frightening and he had access to a Universe treasure. He probably wasn’t much weaker than a Hegemon in might.

“Clan leaders,” Ninedust sent anxiously, “You said that any cultivators who come here must pass your trials. The three Emperors of the Aeonian race should also have to pass the trials, right?”

“Of course.” The sea dragon leader nodded.

“Agreed.” The flaming equine leader nodded its massive head as well.

The sea dragon leader flew into the skies, coiling around itself in midair as it let out a deep, rumbling bellow: “Halt, Emperors.”

“If you do not halt, you shall be attacked by both of our races at the same

time.” The flaming equine stood there on the ground, its entire body blazing with flames as it let out a furious, awesome roar.

“HALT!” There were nearly two hundred beasts in this area, and they roared out this word in unison with unstoppable majesty.

Swish! Swish! Swish! The three Emperors who had been diving downwards through the skies came to a screeching halt, ugly looks on their faces.

“He’s uprooted our omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, and now he wants to take away the Autarch’s blood!” Emperor Anchen stood there in the skies, staring angrily at the distant sea dragon leader as he bellowed, “We Aeonians are definitely going to kill these two thieves! Daolord Darknorth, Ninedust Sectlord... the two of you really are quite bold! How DARE you steal treasures from the ancestral grounds of the Aeonian race?!”

“Ancestral grounds?” Ning flew over to Ninedust, and the two stared back at the three Emperors. With the two races of beasts standing guard over them, they didn’t panic.

“Our two clans are here on the Autarch’s orders to protect this place. Anyone who wishes to benefit from the Autarch’s blood must first pass our trials. Our young friend Darknorth has done so, which means that we are in compliance with the Autarch’s orders. Even if he wishes to take the blood away, there’s nothing wrong with that,” the sea dragon leader said. “But you three? If you also pass the trials, we won’t interfere if you want to kill these two... but if you cannot, we have no choice but to protect our young friends.”

“B-but...” Emperor Islehide spluttered furiously.

“Just pass the trials. Easy, right? Come one at a time and defeat both of our races, that’s all you have to do,” the sea dragon leader said.

Emperor Anchen and the others had ugly looks on their faces. Defeat the two races in succession? Every single one of the flaming equines and sea dragons had reached the Archon level, with the clan leaders being even stronger. Only a true Hegemon would have a chance at surviving an assault from so many of these creatures. Emperor Anchen had already

given it a try long ago, but he wasn't even close to being able to succeed.

"But we are the Aeonians. This is our territory!" Emperor Anchen said furiously.

"No, this is the AUTARCH'S territory. The only thing we know and care about is the Autarch's command," the sea dragon leader said.

"B-b-but... but that omnigeddon bloodfruit tree belongs to our Aeonian race!" Emperor Anchen said.

"Hahaha! You were all too weak and unable to make much use of the Autarch's blood, which was why you planted that omnigeddon bloodfruit tree here all those years ago. Over the course of countless aeons, you have harvested countless fruits from this tree... and the value of those fruits vastly exceeded the value of the original tree itself." The sea dragon leader continued, "You've earned enough. Since our young friend Darknorth has passed our trials, he gets to decide what to do with the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, not you."

"But its ours! It belongs to the Aeonians!" Emperor Islehide was growing anxious as well. The omnigeddon bloodfruit tree had undergone a thorough transformation. Even if it lost access to the Autarch's blood, it was still comparable in value to twelve ordinary trees. It truly was a marvelous treasure.

Most importantly of all... when it was able to absorb essence from the Autarch's blood, the unique fruits it gave birth to were more than ten times more valuable than normal ones, making the tree close in value to Crimsonwave Temple! The Aeonians absolutely viewed it as important as life itself. Once they lost this tree, they'd have to wait millions of chaos cycles before any new tree they planted over the blood would have absorbed enough essence to transform.

But... in roughly a million chaos cycles, the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels would destroy the Endless Territories! There was no way they could rear a second tree. This marvelous tree was literally one of a kind. They had already started to accumulate fruits long ago, as once the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels destroyed everything this entire world would probably be

devoured and destroyed as well. They would no longer have access to any more fruits! In the final million chaos cycles, they were planning to absorb as much of the essence from the Autarch's blood as they could... and they were even planning to shatter the tree apart and drain the essence the tree had taken in from the Autarch's blood.

Chapter 13: Mortal Enemies

The essence of the Autarch's blood would greatly benefit the Aeonian bloodlines of the Aeonian race. To normal cultivators, this tree which Ji Ning had just taken away was nothing more than a tree that would allow for larger-than-normal harvests of fruit. To the Aeonians, however, the Autarch's blood essence within it was worth more than ten million chaos cycles worth of fruit! It was something they absolutely could not afford to lose.

"No point talking too much. Our young friend Darknorth has passed the trials, which means we shall protect him. If you want to act against him, you can simply attempt the trials as well," the sea dragon leader said coldly.

"If you want to fight, let's start. Otherwise, hurry up and beat it," the flaming equine leader roared as well.

Emperor Anchen and the others were enraged, but there was nothing they could do. Ning and Ninedust both let out sighs of relief when they saw this.

"It seems there's nothing they can do to us," Ninedust said with a laugh.

"Once we leave, they'll probably do everything they can to hunt us down," Ning said.

"The Endless Territories are vast, while the Aeonians are mortal enemies of the Dao Alliance! These three Emperors wouldn't dare to act too rashly." Ninedust was quite relaxed.

Ning nodded. Once they left this place, they would be like wild geese disappearing into the skies. Given that the two of them had access to the [Vitalis] art, they could easily mimic the truesoul auras of others. They could literally go anywhere they pleased; there was no need for them to fear these three Emperors at all.

Suddenly...

"Good, good... good!" An utterly enraged laugh rang out, echoing in the

heavens.

Ning and Ninedust both raised their heads, surprised, to stare at the three leading Emperors of the Aeonian race. The leader of the three, Emperor Anchen, was so enraged he was laughing. He let out a furious growl, “If that’s the case... estate-spirit, come out immediately!”

Whoosh. A ripple of power manifested, causing the light in the skies to coalesce into the form of a white-haired woman with an extraordinary aura. An enigmatic smile on her face, she asked, “What is it?”

“The spirit of the estate?” Ning and Ninedust were both shocked. Suddenly, they remembered that when they had been in the beastworld with the Autarch’s Dao, that world held an estate-spirit within it. It wasn’t unreasonable for this world to have an estate-spirit of its own as well.

“Spirit of the estate, this was a world created for us by our ancestor. These are our ancestral lands! But these two outsider Daolords have not only stolen away our omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, they even seek to steal the Autarch’s blood. Please intervene and slay these two interloper Daolords, estate-spirit!” Emperor Anchen said loudly.

“Ancestor?” Ning was surprised.

“Emperor Anchen, did you just say ‘ancestor’? Wasn’t this place created by Autarch Bolin?” Ninedust called out loudly with surprise.

The distant Emperor Anchen glanced downwards, a hint of a cold smile on his lips. “The members of the mighty Aeonian race are the descendants of Autarch Bolin!”

Ning and Ninedust were both rather stunned. The descendants of Autarch Bolin? Were the Aeonians really this incredible?

“Any member of the Aeonian race who has been Awakened shall possess the bloodlines of our almighty ancestor, Autarch Bolin!” Emperor Anchen said proudly, “The Aeonian bloodline is special... because it is the bloodline of an Autarch! This is a world which Autarch Bolin created for us; it is our ancestral lands. The Autarch’s blood was left behind for us by the Autarch as well.”

Ning and Ninedust were both stunned. It made sense. The Aeonians did possess an incredible bloodline; supposedly, after becoming Eternal Emperors they could use their bloodline to slowly improve in power even further. It must be understood that for most Emperors, improving in power was incredibly difficult.

“Spirit of the estate, you can go ahead and slay these two interlopers.” Emperor Anchen looked anxiously at the estate-spirit.

The white-haired woman let out a cold snort. “I am unable to intervene.”

“Unable to intervene? How can you be unable to intervene?” Emperor Anchen was starting to grow frantic. He knew just how powerful the estate-spirit was; within this estate-world, the estate-spirit was virtually invincible! Even Hegemons would probably be weaker than it in power.

“I must inform you that this world was not, in fact, created for you Aeonians,” the white-haired woman said. “During the Dawn War against the Sithe, Autarch Bolin was worried about our side being defeated and so he left behind many backup plans to help the cultivators rise to power again in the future. He created this estate-world for that purpose, and those three hundred-plus Hegemons willingly passed down their legacies as well. This was all for the sake of the countless cultivators who would be born in the future. It wasn’t just for you Aeonians!”

Emperor Anchen was stunned.

“Afterwards, we won the war. Autarch Bolin’s life grew peaceful once more, but he eventually grew lonely and so developed the Aeonian bloodline, creating your Aeonian race. The Autarch left behind a single undiluted drop of the original Aeonian blood in this place, hoping that some of the many descendants of the Aeonian race would be able to grow powerful enough to absorb it. Alas... this branch here in the Flamedragon Realmverse is far too weak. Despite the passage of countless years, none of you have been able to absorb this blood.” The estate-spirit chuckled.

Emperor Anchen, Emperor Islehide, and Emperor Duug all felt rather ashamed.

“Are you saying this isn’t the Autarch’s blood?” the distant sea dragon

leader asked, puzzled.

“It is the Autarch’s blood, but it was formed after countless unique processes were applied to it. This blood was part of the original blood which gave birth to the Aeonian bloodlines and race, which was why I referred to it as the ‘original Aeonian blood,’ ” the white-haired woman said. “If any of the Aeonians were able to reach Hegemony, he would more or less be able to absorb this drop of Aeonian blood. Once he did so, he would finally and truly be qualified to refer to himself as a true child of Autarch Bolin, and he would be far stronger than ordinary Hegemons in power.”

“Unfortunately... this lot here is completely useless.” The white-haired woman shook her head, then turned to look at the still-stunned Ning and Ninedust.

“As for you two? You came into my estate-world using the Autarch’s medallion,” the white-haired woman said. “This naturally counts as being here with the Autarch’s commission. I won’t act against you two! However, the Autarch’s blood was the font for the entire Aeonian race. Ordinary cultivators like yourselves cannot absorb it, no matter how hard you try. Also... Daolord Darknorth, there’s no need for you to waste your efforts trying to move it. I am in control of this estate-world, and I absolutely will not permit anyone to take it away!”

“If someone wishes to take it away, the only method permissible is absorption... but only Aeonians can accomplish it. Hegemon-level Aeonians, at that.” The white-haired woman glanced sideways at Emperor Anchen. “You were given every advantage in the world, but you made nothing of it. The exalted Aeonians actually ended up having such useless progeny... what a pity. Hmph.” As she spoke, she began to vanish.

“Wait! This realmverse is about to be destroyed soon!” Emperor Anchen called out frantically, “When that happens there will be no way for this estate-world to exist by itself.”

“Relax. An estate-world which was laboriously created by Autarch Bolin will not be so easily destroyed,” the white-haired woman said. “However...

when the Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels destroy this area, this estate-world shall vanish from it. The ties of destiny which link us together shall have come to an end, and I will go search for a different branch. Hmph... Autarch Bolin left behind many branches throughout the vast Chaosverse, and many of those branches were given no chance to absorb any of the Autarch's blood. I gave you more than thirty million chaos cycles, but you weren't able to make the best of this opportunity. Don't blame anyone but yourself."

Emperor Anchen and the others began to grow frantic. Become a Hegemon? Easier said than done! There had been quite a few supreme Daolords in the history of the Aeonian race in this realmverse, but their chances of succeeding in the Daomerge were absolutely minuscule. Thus far, not a single one of them had ever succeeded in the Daomerge and becoming a Hegemon.

As for existing Emperors who were at the Archon level to reach the Hegemon level? That was even harder. The Aeonians knew a great many things, but they had only heard of a single Hegemon known as the 'Paragon of Pills' who had started off as an ordinary Eternal Emperor but then managed to train all the way up to the Hegemon level.

"Haha, the beastworld we visited previously ended up flying away as well. It seems as though this estate-world is also capable of independent movement," Ninedust sent mentally. "The Autarch's blood truly is terrifying, though... apparently, only Aeonian Hegemons are capable of absorbing it. How powerful would they become upon doing so?"

"So this is what an Autarch is capable of." Ning stared at the swirling globe of blood inside the massive crater. Its aura dwarfed that of any Hegemon; how strong would one become after absorbing it? Alas, Autarch Bolin had left it behind for the Aeonians alone.

"So what should we do next?" Ninedust sent mentally.

"What can we do? Since we cannot earn the Autarch's blood, we might as well leave," Ning sent mentally.

Right at this moment, Emperor Anchen's voice rang down from the skies

above: “Daolord Darknorth, Ninedust Sectlord... all you need to do is leave behind the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree and swear a lifeblood oath not to divulge any of those three hundred-plus Hegemonic legacies to outsiders! If you are willing to do this, then the three of us would also be willing to swear oaths to never attack or pursue you through any means at all.”

“The Hegemonic legacies? Haha, I’m a member of the Ancients! For the sake of all these legacies, the Ancients would definitely do everything in their power to protect me. Do you really think I’m afraid of you Aeonians?” Ninedust snickered.

Ning raised his head to stare into the skies as well. If he eventually failed in his Daomerge, these Hegemonic legacies were the most important thing he could leave behind for the Three Realms in the future.

“Darknorth, are you going to reject our offer as well?” Emperor Anchen growled.

“These three hundred-plus Hegemonic legacies were left behind for all cultivators, not just you Aeonians. By what right do you demand an oath from us?” Ning replied coldly. Not even the Hegemons themselves had demanded Ning swear a lifeblood oath; what made the Aeonians think they had that right?

“Damn them.”

“They are courting death.” The nearby Emperor Duug and Emperor Islehide were infuriated as well.

Emperor Anchen said furiously, “This is your final warning. Hand over the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree and swear the lifeblood oath! Otherwise, we Aeonians will use everything at our disposal to hunt down and kill you two. We won’t stop until you are dead!!!”

Whoosh.

Ning vanished into thin air. As for Ninedust, he lifted the Autarch’s medallion up and activated the power within it. A ripple of might surrounded him... and a heartbeat later, he vanished without a trace, having left this estate-world.

Chapter 14: Secluded Cultivation

Emperor Anchen, Emperor Duug, and Emperor Islehide were all stunned. They had just issued a dire threat to pursue Darknorth and Ninedust until they were dead... but they had left without even saying a word in response? This attitude indicated that they truly felt no fear towards the Aeonians at all.

“Estate-spirit, how could they have just left like that? Did you let them out?” Emperor Anchen turned to glare furiously at the distant white-haired woman. When Aeonians wished to leave this estate-world, the estate-spirit had to teleport them through spacetime out of it.

The white-haired woman said calmly, “I already stated that they came in via the Autarch’s medallion. They left using the same method! It had nothing to do with me at all. Besides, even if I did send them away I would at most be able to send them to another world within the domain of the Aeonian Kingdom! However, they used the Autarch’s medallion to flee far, far away.”

“The Autarch’s medallion?” Emperor Anchen and the others felt both enraged and helpless. They had never heard of this medallion before, but the estate-spirit’s words were beyond question. They couldn’t help but sigh to themselves. Oh, Autarch... since you made this world, you should’ve just left it to us, your children. Why did you have to leave behind a medallion for outsiders to use?

In truth, however... Autarch Bolin had first created the medallions, and only then had created the Aeonian race!

“Please send us out,” Emperor Anchen said.

“Very well.” The white-haired woman nodded. “You still have over one million chaos cycles left. Your branch still has a chance at absorbing the Autarch’s blood. When this realmverse is destroyed, it’ll be time for me to leave.”

“We understand,” Emperor Anchen said, although in his heart he was unwilling to accept this. Whoosh. The white-haired woman waved her

arm, causing a dimensional ripple to spread out and cover all three Emperors. They were teleported through spacetime to the planet outside of this estate-world.

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The three Emperors reappeared within the ancient temple.

“Eh?” Emperor Anchen closed his eyes, sending out an invisible ripple of power which completely merged into every part of the Aeonian Kingdom.

“The Aeonian Kingdom just informed me,” Emperor Anchen said as he opened his eyes, “That no living beings have entered it via the first ancestral ground. It seems as though the estate-spirit was right; Darknorth and Ninedust have already teleported away to an extremely distant place thanks to their Autarch’s medallion.”

“Damn.”

“I’ve never heard of this medallion. They’re able to enter and exit our first ancestral ground by using it?” The other two Emperors didn’t want to accept this either.

“The Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels are going to destroy the Flamedragon Realmverse soon. To successfully absorb the Autarch’s blood in the next million or so chaos cycles... our chances are quite low,” Emperor Anchen said. “We’ve harvested many fruits over the years, but we’ve used up many of them to help rear all of those Daolords. We absolutely have to acquire the large amount of Autarch’s blood essence which was distilled into the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree.”

“Agreed.” The other two Emperors nodded as well. The Autarch’s blood was the wellspring for the Aeonian bloodline, and the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree had drawn upon the essence of that blood for over thirty million chaos cycles. This had caused the tree to undergo a fundamental transformation. When they fully absorbed all of the essence within it, it would be of tremendous benefit to them. This mattered to the Aeonians more than anything else.

“Duug,” Emperor Anchen commanded, “Immediately mobilize all the

forces we have available to find as much information as we can regarding Daolord Darknorth and the Ninedust Sectlord. Once we find any trace of them, move to kill them and take that tree back.”

“Agreed.” Emperor Duug said seriously, “I’ll oversee this matter personally!”

“Islehide,” Emperor Anchen instructed, “You’ve made quite a few friends amongst the Emperors of the various races. Come up with a way to convince them to help us track down Darknorth.”

“Very well.” Emperor Islehide nodded. Although the Aeonians and the Dao Alliance were mortal enemies, the Aeonians were still the weakest of the six powers. The Brightshore Kingdom, the Aberrants, and the Ancient cultivators each had a Hegemon, while the Dark Kingdom consisted of many cultivators from another realmverse who had all gathered together, allowing them to survive despite being ostracized by all five of the other organizations. This was a testament to how deep the Dark Kingdom’s foundation was.

Winesage, Daolord Skyshatter, Daolord Owlblack... they all belonged to the Dark Kingdom. The number of elite Daolords they had was another testament to their power.

As for the Dao Alliance? That went without saying. 99% of the Endless Territories was under their control, and they had countless Daolords and many publicly acknowledged Emperors, with even more being in seclusion. The Dao Alliance didn’t care about the other powers at all.

The Aeonians were different. At the top end, they had no Hegemonic cultivators. In terms of raw numbers, they had very few people! It was all thanks to the Aeonian Kingdom that they hadn’t been wiped out. But of course, if a particularly incredible figure arose within their ranks who succeeded in the Daomerge and became a Hegemon, that person could absorb the Autarch’s blood and vault the entire Aeonian race to become the pre-eminent power in the Flamedragon Realmverse. Alas, the Aeonians had never been able to produce a Hegemon.

As a result, the Aeonians were the weakest of the six major powers... and

the enmity between them and the Dao Alliance was deep and unabiding. As a result, the high-level Aeonians did their best to try and befriend high-level members of the Dao Alliance, trading them treasures and so forth. This was one of the reasons why the Dao Alliance hadn't declared an all-out war against the Aeonian race.

In fact, the high-level members of the Dao Alliance held a certain belief; they viewed the existence of the Aeonians as a good way to help temper the countless Daolords under their rule.

Emperor Islehide was the primary point of contact for making friends with the Emperors of the other races and organizations.

"Legacies from over three hundred Hegemons, and the essence of the omnigeddon bloodfruit tree! Both things are supremely important to our Aeonian race." Emperor Anchen's eyes flashed with sharp light. "From this day forth, Darknorth and Ninedust shall be the greatest enemies of the Aeonian race. We have to find them."

"We won't let them escape," Emperor Duug said.

"Sooner or later, they'll fall into our hands." Emperor Islehide narrowed his eyes as well.

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Whoosh. Ninedust appeared out of nowhere within an empty patch of space which was incredibly far away from the Aeonian Kingdom. He then waved his hand, allowing Ning to appear next to him.

Crack. The medallion in Ninedust's hand began to break apart. "The power's been used up." Ninedust shook his head helplessly. "A pity. Even if we weren't able to use it to re-enter the Aeonian Kingdom, it still would've been an excellent escape mechanism. It's gone now though."

"Yes, it is indeed an incredible treasure for escape. Not even a host of Hegemons would be able to stop it," Ning said. "And it really does allow one to teleport quite a long distance through spacetime." If Ning had to rely on his own powers to traverse spacetime, it would probably take him half a year to travel such a great distance.

“Darknorth, what are you planning to do next?” Ninedust asked.

“We’ve really won quite a few things for ourselves,” Ning said with a laugh. “Those three hundred-plus Hegemonic legacies are particularly important! The Aeonians are going to go all-out in searching for us, be it for the sake of those legacies or for the sake of that omnigeddon bloodfruit tree. In the end, they are still one of the six top organizations in the Endless Territories, and they’ve been around for a very long time. They’ll probably have quite a few methods they can use to search for us.”

“Agreed.” Ninedust nodded solemnly as well. “Right. We have to be careful. We shouldn’t tell anyone at all where we are.”

Ning agreed: “Only the two of us can know where we are. We can’t tell anyone at all. As for those legacies... we didn’t have enough time in the estate-world to really meditate on them properly. We should find a suitable place to go into seclusion and train.”

“Very well.” Ninedust laughed. “I also feel that we need more time to train.”

The two quickly departed. After traveling for another ten-plus years they were deep within the Dao Alliance’s territory, at which point they chose a planet to go into.

“Let’s pick that planet.” Swoosh. Swoosh. Ning and Ninedust descended upon the surface of that planet.

“Clouds, come!” Ninedust stood at the top of that planet, letting out a loud shout. Instantly, a thick layer of clouds began to manifest over the planet, with a series of runic seals beginning to appear within the clouds. This separated them from the outside world, creating an independent local realm. Ning and Ninedust wanted to avoid their auras from leaking outsides. Powerful World-level cultivators and Daolords would often do something similar when they established an estate within a particular planet.

Fogstone, one of the planets Ning had visited when he had first entered the Badlands Territory, was a good example.

“Rain, descend!” Ninedust let out another loud shout. Instantly, a large amount of rain began to cascade downwards. Soon, lakes and even oceans began to form atop the formerly parched planet.

Given Ning and Ninedust’s abilities, it took them just three days to completely transform this planet. It now had an atmosphere, clouds, lakes, oceans, countless types of vegetation, and even some simple insects and bugs were beginning to take form.

“Go.” Ninedust waved his hand, instantly causing some of the living beings he carried within his estate-realm to emerge into this new world. This included tens of thousands of ordinary humans, as well as many types of animals, fish, and birds.

Now, this planet truly was suitable for them to reside within.

“We didn’t spend enough time within the Autarch’s estate-world; we didn’t really analyze many of those Hegemonic techniques in detail.” Ninedust said eagerly, “After we do so, we might make great gains. Perhaps my chances at the Daomerge can be improved even further.”

“I might be able to make some breakthroughs as well once I meditate on these Hegemonic legacies.” Ning was stuck at the final step and had been unable to break through to the last stage. Once he did, he would become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, at which point he truly would be able to roam the Endless Territories with impunity. Most likely, only the three mighty Hegemons would be stronger than him... but that final step was incredibly hard to take.

They were now being pursued by the Aeonians. As a result, they decided to thoroughly study all of the three hundred-plus Hegemonic legacies and entered secluded meditation.

Chapter 15: The Modern Three Realms

Shortly after Ji Ning entered secluded meditation, he received word that his master Patriarch Subhuti had returned to the Three Realms alongside Windfiend. The two were planning to break through to the Samsara Daolord level.

The Three Realms. Serpentwing Lake. Brightheart Island.

The black-robed Ning, Subhuti, and Windfiend were seated close to each other, drinking wine and chatting.

“Brother Windfiend and I have spent hundreds of millions of years wandering the outside world. We have benefited greatly from our experiences and feel that it is time for us to break through to become Samsara Daolords,” Subhuti said with a laugh.

“Haha... we’ve wandered the Badlands Territory and even a number of the nearby territories. I don’t want to brag, but it is quite hard for us to find any World-level cultivators who are our equals.” Windfiend seemed quite smug as well.

“Oh?” Ning was surprised. “Windfiend, Master... can the two of you give me a demonstration and show me the level you have reached?”

“Very well.” Windfiend smiled as a series of additional Windfiends began to appear in the area around them. Dozens of them appeared, all with different expressions and postures.

Seeing this, Ning nodded slowly. “For you to have reached such a level in the Dao of Wind... you must have mastered a Supreme Dao.”

“Now watch Master’s abilities.” Subhuti put down his wine cup. Instantly, spacetime in the surrounding area began to ripple. Space itself seemed to transform as though this area was severed from the rest of the universe, and the speed of time began to change as well. It was like the three of them were aboard a small vessel, with the outside world being a river of spacetime.

“Given Master’s mastery over the Dao of Spacetime, he probably

mastered a Supreme Dao as well.” Ning was rather stunned. It must be remembered that he had only left quite ordinary techniques to the Three Realms in the past. Those were all techniques he had acquired from Vastheaven Palace, and there was nothing particularly impressive. For example, there were no Hegemonic legacies! How was it that his master and Windfiend had both mastered a Supreme Dao each?

It must be remembered that Ning had only gained his Omega Sword Dao thanks to his experiences in Vastheaven Palace, in the Archaeus Region, and many other places. If it hadn’t been for all of those things, he probably would be just slightly superior to Subhuti and Windfiend.

“Master and Windfiend truly are monstrously talented,” Ning sighed secretly in amazement. In truth, all of the Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realm were freakishly talented. Originally, they had no legacies at all... but they had managed to develop their own incredible techniques. Three Purities, Tathagata, the Three Sovereigns of Mankind, Houyi, Subhuti... they had all developed techniques that allowed them to fight those at a higher level, which meant that they vastly surpassed those on the same level in terms of insight into the Dao. Even the slightly weaker ones like Sun Wukong, Daoist Jade Cauldron, or Maitreya were still at a higher level of enlightenment than those in the outside world.

“Windfiend, Master... do not be in a rush to break through just yet,” Ning said solemnly. “I have just left a few truly top-tier techniques within the Three Realms Archives! Go and check them out first.”

“Truly top-tier techniques?” Subhuti and Windfiend were both startled.

“The techniques you gave us previously were already quite good.”

“Are there even better ones now?” The two both looked at Ning. The two were incredibly talented, and as soon as they reached the World level they immediately reached a level of power where very few of their peers were able to defeat them. However, their experiences simply weren’t as incredible as Ning’s, nor did they have as many fortuitous encounters. Thankfully, Ning had gifted the Three Realms with many techniques; otherwise, their talents would’ve gone to waste.

“You’ll know once you go take a look,” Ning said with a laugh. He didn’t explain in detail.

“Alright.”

“We’ll go take a look first.” Both of them were deeply intrigued by Ning’s secretive attitude, and they both hurried over to the Three Realms Archives to take a look.

The new additions Ning had just added into the Three Realms Archives... included the World-level parts of the Hegemonic legacies which Ning had gained!

Ning watched as his master Subhuti and Windfiend departed. His body flickered. Whoosh! He arrived in the void outside the Three Realms, where he stood by himself.

“More and more, I’m beginning to get the feeling that the Three Realms is an extraordinary place.” Ning stared at the many spread-out planets in the Three Realms, including the three thousand major worlds and the trillions of minor worlds.

“When I was out adventuring through the outside world, I began to understand how unique the Three Realms are... but I didn’t realize just how amazing it was. After a few hundred million years, though... the Three Realms have completely changed,” Ning sighed in amazement.

The Three Realms had undergone a gradual transformation, which was why Ning hadn’t noticed anything at first. After hundreds of millions of years, however, the difference was quite drastic and apparent.

Many years ago the most dazzling figures of the earlier eras, such as Daoist Three Purities, the Three Sovereigns of Mankind, Lord Tathagata the Buddha, Houyi, and Demonheart had all perished in battle. The survivors who were on par with them, Subhuti and Windfiend, were now close to becoming Samsara Daolords... and extraordinary ones at that!

As for the many elite figures like Sun Wukong, Buddha Maitreya, or Yang Jie? After hundreds of millions of years of cultivation, they had all broken through to the World level as well. Even Brightmoon had

improved! Although she wasn't quite that talented, she had still been able to break through to become a Celestial Immortal thanks to her own efforts. Under Ning's guidance, she had actually reached the Elder God level.

What's more... the success rates for Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms breaking through to become Celestial Immortals was skyrocketing! Although some would fail and become Loose Immortals, many would reincarnate and eventually succeed in becoming Celestial Immortals. Only a small percentage were unlucky enough to actually perish to the Celestial Tribulation!

The change was all-encompassing. Celestial Immortals, True Immortals, Ancestral Immortals, Chaos Immortals... after the Three Realms gained so many legacies, the breakthrough rates at every single level had skyrocketed.

"Everyone in the Three Realms is much more talented than those in the outside world," Ning sighed. "The same was true for the Seamless Chaosworld. The Immortals and Fiendgods from the Seamless Chaosworld were on par with that of the Pangu Chaosworld." Ning grew increasingly curious. "What made them so special?"

By now, Ning was definitely one of the major powers in the Endless Territories. He had reached the Archon level of power, and thus had a much broader vision than many. He knew that there were some chaosworlds, including the ones which Hegemons had labored over or ones like the Sithe worlds, which were quite special and which gave birth to living beings who were noticeably more talented than those in the rest of the world.

What made the Three Realms so special?

"Perhaps it has something to do with the Azureflower Estate," Ning mused. He then shook his head and chuckled. Only with enough strength could one act with confidence. Only when he took the final step and became a Daolord of the Fourth Step would he have reached the apex. When that happened, in all the Flamedragon Realmverse the only ones

more powerful than him would be the three Hegemons!

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Windfiend had been the Lord of All Fiends of the Three Realms, the supreme leader of the Seamless Gate. He was the fastest person in all the Three Realms.

Subhuti was a master of the Dao of Spacetime. His mastery of it had been supreme within the Three Realms.

These two were exceedingly talented figures. After studying the World-level parts of the Hegemonic legacies, they immediately began to seek to merge multiple Supreme Daos together!

After training for 120 million years (which translated into 10 billion 'accelerated' years within his temporal acceleration treasure), Windfiend finally managed to merge three Supreme Daos together... and he broke through to become a Samsara Daolord at one go!

Subhuti was a bit slower. He had to train for over 300 million years, also using a temporal acceleration treasure. Finally, he also succeeded in merging multiple Supreme Daos and became a Samsara Daolord.

But of course... only the two of them reached such heights. The other Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realm were a bit weaker.

"Windfiend, Master... these legacies are critically important. I shall personally watch over these legacies, and anyone who wishes to study them must swear lifeblood oaths. If I perish, I will entrust them to you and Windfiend to watch over," Ning said solemnly. These were the copies of the hundreds of Hegemonic legacies, and his Primaltwin had spent an extremely long period of time memorizing them.

"These legacies..." Subhuti and Windfiend were absolutely stunned by the enormous repository of legacies in front of them. These legacies were of limited use to Ning, who trained in the Omega Sword Dao, but they would be of tremendous use to all other cultivators. This was far more valuable than anything Ning had acquired in the Brightshore Kingdom or the Archaeus Region.

“The existences of these legacies cannot be divulged in the slightest.” Subhuti looked at Ning, his heart aching for his disciple. “Disciple, don’t put yourself under too much pressure when adventuring. Take things slowly, one step at a time. You’ve already done enough for the Three Realms.”

“Darknorth, be careful when out adventuring. Subhuti and I are still too weak; the Three Realms needs you standing guard over it,” Windfiend said. After seeing the legacies, he understood just how weak he was. He was still just a Daolord of the First Step; in the Endless Territories, he counted for absolutely nothing.

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All of Ning’s loved ones were in the Three Realms. His father, Ji Yichuan... his mother, Yuchi Snow... his daughter, Ji Brightmoon... Subhuti, Uncle White, Little Qing, Immortal Diancai, Mu Northson, Sun Wukong, and more were all here.

Although Ning was often adventuring with the hope of reversing the flows of spacetime and reviving his wife, he also cared tremendously about his other loved ones. Only if he could absolutely ensure their safety would he be able to truly lay rest to his concerns and go out adventuring!

“Brightmoon.” A black-robed Ning was standing on the surface of Serpentwing Lake.

“Father.” The white-robed Brightmoon was standing on the surface of the lake as well. Her life truly was relaxed and leisurely; with a peerless master of the Dao of the Sword like Ji Ning being her tutor and guide, everything was so simple. In fact, Ning even occasionally arranged for her to go out and explore the Badlands Territory. Given Ning’s current level of power, a single step was all it took for them to reach the Badlands Territory.

“Let me see if your sword-arts have improved or not,” Ning said.

“Yes, Father.” Brightmoon smiled, followed by her sword-light lighting up. A total of 3600 Immortal swords hung in the air around her. This was a terrifyingly powerful sword-formation technique which Ning had passed

down to her. For some reason, Brightmoon simply had no talent for training as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and so she was focused on being a Ki Refiner.

Whooooosh. Sword-light covered the entire world.

Ning began to spar against his daughter. He had been at the side of his daughter and his parents for hundreds of millions of years now. He had always dreamed of having Yu Wei by their side one day as well, accompanying him and watching as he taught their daughter swordplay. If that day ever came, he truly would be able to die with no regrets.

Chapter 16: A Calamity Descends

The black-robed Primaltwin Ji Ning spent all of its time within the Three Realms, accompanying his family members and enjoying a life of leisure. Ning's true body, however, continued to fearlessly advance and improve, not slacking off in the slightest! If he had, he wouldn't have reached such a terrifying level of power.

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A young man and a woman were standing at the prow of a large ship that was cruising through the waves of a vast sea.

"Senior apprentice-brother, you've grown much more powerful and have reached the Foundation stage. You'll definitely be ranked in the top three within our clan's tournament. In fact, you might even take first place!" the green-robed woman said excitedly.

"I was able to reach the Foundation stage, but the others might have made breakthroughs of their own. The clan competition will have three thousand disciples competing within it. Seizing first place is not going to be an easy task," the black-robed youth said. His words were modest, but a hint of a smile was playing at his lips.

He truly had made tremendous gains this time. He had no idea who that old fisherman was, but the man was incredibly powerful. That casual finger-wave had contained unfathomably profundity within it.

The black-robed youth stroked his chest, where an ordinary-looking little rock was hanging from a necklace. The old fisherman had given it to him, and it contained an extremely profound set of staff-arts within it.

"The clan competition? At my current level of power, the clan competition is nothing. My level of comprehension has skyrocketed so much that I should be able to break through to the Core Formation stage with ease." The black-robed youth's eyes gleamed.

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Far away, within a flying ship that was hidden in the mists above the

world. Ji Ning and Ninedust were seated aboard this ship.

“An old fisherman? Really? Ninedust, you aren’t exactly handsome, but there was no need for you to transform yourself into a rheumy-eyed, white-haired old man,” Ning said with a laugh. “And you went out of your way to give that mortal some guidance. What, is he very talented? Why didn’t I notice it?”

“He’s decent for a mortal, but to people like us he truly is nothing special.” Ninedust sighed. “But... when I saw him, I felt as though I saw myself from long ago. That’s why I decided to guide him.”

Ning was startled. Ninedust was a very arrogant and solitary person who killed without blinking and was unscrupulous when pursuing his goals. However, he was willing to risk his own life to aid those he viewed as friends. That young mortal youth was similarly a solitary and lonely figure, but he was just as willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of that junior apprentice-sister of his.

“He’s a lucky kid,” Ning said.

“You and I remade this world when we chose to set up our estate here, bringing countless living beings into existence,” Ninedust said smugly. “Thus, we are responsible for guiding and teaching them.”

“You? Guide and teach?” Ning shook his head.

The living beings on this world had already gone through the earliest barbarian days, discovered primitive cultivation techniques, experienced a dazzling golden age, suffered through a great apocalypse, and finally entered the current, fairly stable era. Ning truly did work attentively to guide this world... but Ninedust? He was a much harder-hearted figure than Ning. He didn’t give a damn about whether the living beings here lived or died.

Ninedust occasionally taught some people, but it was strictly due to sudden spurts of interest. For example, just now he transformed into a fisherman and transmitted a set of staff-arts to the kid, then tossed him a stone. That was it! He didn’t even teach the kid an actual cultivation technique.

“Eh?” Ning and Ninedust’s faces suddenly tightened.

“Let’s go,” Ning barked. Whoosh! The flying vessel disappeared as Ning and Ninedust instantly departed from this planet and arrived in the void beyond it.

“What’s going on? Why are the realmship fragments we found in the Sithe ruins resonating?” Ning frowned.

“Mine is resonating as well. My realmship fragment is trembling right now, as though it wants to fly in a certain direction.” Ninedust pointed towards a direction which led into the chaotic void.

The two each had part of the shattered realmship. Both of those parts were shaking right now, wanting to go flying off in a certain direction.

“Something’s wrong,” Ning said. “When we scavenged the realmship wreckage in the Sithe ruins, we each collected a fairly undamaged piece. There’s never been a resonance like this before! Now that there is a sudden resonance... it has to have something to do with the Sithe.”

“Shall we go take a look?” Ninedust asked.

“Yes, let’s go take a look.” Ning nodded. Both of them were bold due to their power. This thing which was resonating with their realmship fragments could very well be a great fortune! Realmships were treasures which even Hegemons would go wild over, after all.

Ning led Ninedust in tearing through spacetime and advancing. “Wait, something’s wrong.” As soon as they exited the spacetime tear, Ning’s face tightened. “I can sense that the distance between us and the resonance is rapidly decreasing. They’re moving towards us as well.”

“Yes, they are headed in our direction.” Ninedust’s face turned grim as well. For the resonance to grow stronger and stronger meant that the distance was clearly decreasing.

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A skinny man with white eyebrows and deep green eyes was standing within the chaotic void. He was dressed in long white robes and had white

hair. His oily green eyes emanated an insidious coldness that was more than enough to inspire terror in the hearts of other cultivators. He was one of the most awe-inspiring members of the Dao Alliance, one of the eight Archons of the Sacred Cities... Archon Silksnow.

Silksnow... this sounded like a woman's Daoist title, but he was indeed a man. Archon Silksnow was an extremely evil individual. Comparing Sectlord Timedream to him was like comparing an innocent baby with a demon who had mass-murdered over a trillion people!

According to the legends, Archon Silksnow had been born within a great apocalypse where countless living beings had died. As a rain of blood fell from the skies, an infant came crawling out of the torn-open belly of his deceased mother. The child was savage and bloodthirsty by nature, and he was inconceivably talented when it came to cultivation. His path of cultivation was one of slaughter and an endless sea of blood.

Nobody could stop him! Nobody! He actually trained all the way up at one go, succeeding in his Daomerge and becoming one of the eight Archons of the Sacred Cities! He was definitely a dominating and overwhelmingly powerful figure, and the countless bloodthirsty, violent cultivators of the Endless Territories all submitted to his rule. In fact, there were quite a few extremely violent Emperors who chose to follow him! In the Dao Alliance, he was ranked third amongst the eight Archons of the Sacred Cities! He was one of the truly terrifying figures of the Dao Alliance.

"Eh?" Archon Silksnow stared towards a certain direction with his oily green eyes. "It's coming from over there! My realmship is resonating powerfully with something in that direction." An excited look flashed through Archon Silksnow's eyes.

"Master, Master! It's another part of a realmship. It's another part!" The vessel-spirit of his tattered realmship was extremely excited.

"Excellent." Archon Silksnow's white eyebrows fluttered. "I'll take it for you."

In all the Endless Territories, the only ones Archon Silksnow feared were

the three mighty Hegemons. He held no fear towards any of the other experts at all. It must be remembered that he had slaughtered his way to becoming a dominating figure. How could he possibly fear others?

Swoosh! A streak of snow-white saber light tore through spacetime. Archon Silksnow stepped into the tunnel, traversing through spacetime towards the direction of the resonance.

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“It’s moving closer to us... and it’s moving incredibly fast. Much faster than me when I tear through spacetime!” Ning turned pale. “Ninedust, we need to leave immediately.”

“Even faster than you?” Ninedust was startled as well. The difference in speed at which one tore through the void in order to travel was a testament to a difference in insight. Ning immediately led Ninedust in a frantic retreat.

“They are starting to run?” Archon Silksnow gently stroked his long, droopy white eyebrows. “They won’t be able to flee.” He continued to tear through spacetime in hot pursuit.

Ning fled at full speed, wanting to flee somewhere safe such as the Brightshore Kingdom or one of the Sacred Cities.

“He’s too fast. We won’t be able to make it.” Ning gritted his teeth. “It seems our only choice is to pick a battlefield to fight him head-on.”

“Ninedust, set up your formations right away,” Ning sent. “We need to pick the battlefield, then set up formations and await his arrival.”

“Fine.” Ninedust nodded. Judging from how fast the person was, that person should’ve reached a higher level of enlightenment than Ning. How strong he actually was, however, would only be determined through actual combat.

“Focus.” Ninedust immediately tossed out a black globe. As the black globe flew out, it quickly flew towards a distant, desolate planet. It merged itself into the planet, causing a layer of black light to appear on the planet’s surface. Countless runes could be seen flickering over the surface

of the black light.

“Hide,” Ninedust growled. The countless black runes all turned reserved and stately.

Ning produced a treasure as well. This was a treasure he had acquired from the Sithe ruins, a deep blue necklace that looked broken. Ning tossed it out, and it immediately flew towards that planet and merged into its depths.

Ning and Ninedust both flew towards that planet and landed on its surface. They only had enough time to set up three layers of defenses before they sensed a powerful aura appear off in the distance. A white-robed, white-haired, white-browed man tore straight through the void and appeared before them, his eyebrows fluttering in the astral wind. He turned to stare in their direction with his oily green eyes. Although he was very thin, Ning and Ninedust didn’t feel that he was small at all; they only felt an utterly terrifying and dominating aura spread out towards them.

“Archon Silksnow!” Ning and Ninedust both turned pale. They never would’ve imagined that their opponent was the most savage and brutal of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities... Archon Silksnow!

Chapter 17: Negotiations

Archon Silksnow's eyebrows fluttered, a look of surprise flashing through his oily green eyes. He then let out a cold chuckle: "You fled quite fast. I had thought that it was an Emperor... who would've thought it was you two kids?"

"Greetings, Archon Silksnow," Ji Ning and Ninedust both bowed modestly.

"Hmph." Archon Silksnow let out a cold snort. Instantly, a blurry aura of light appeared which covered an area of ten billion kilometers. Spacetime in this region was completely severed from the outside world. This caused Ning and Ninedust to turn pale. Archon Silksnow then made his move.

Whoosh. He suddenly charged downwards, leaving a streak of light behind in the skies as he arced downwards like curved saber-light. An aura of supreme coldness pierced towards them, seeming to penetrate their souls and truesouls.

It was simply too fast. This strike was the fastest saber-strike Ning had ever seen, so fast that Ning felt a sense of panic.

It was also too cold. The saber-intent from this strike caused Ning's very truesoul to shiver from the cold. This was the level which a true lord of the Sacred Cities was at! The golems Ning had previously encountered, as well as the flaming beasts and sea dragons he had encountered in the estate-world, were extremely strong and extremely fast but much inferior when it came to actual insights into the mysteries of the Dao.

In terms of insight and understanding, this Archon Silksnow definitely surpassed Ning in every regard!

"What?!" Ning and Ninedust were both shocked. They didn't expect for Archon Silksnow to almost immediately attack after saying just a few words. Clearly, he wanted to take their lives!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Ning immediately manifested three heads and six arms, drawing all six

Northbow swords and executing his Omega Sword Dao – Soleheart in a full-power defense. Faced with such a terrifying strike, Ning didn't even think about counter-attacking. His only thought was to hold and defend first! Three of his swords just barely managed to intercept the saber-light, and as they did a surge of cold energy seemed to slam into and through him like a giant hammer, crushing him with its power.

BOOM! Ning was immediately knocked flying backwards. He slammed into the ground of the planet, causing the planet to shudder and enormous crevices and gorges to appear on its surface which were hundreds of kilometers long. The planet now looked like a cracked turtle shell.

“He's too powerful.” Ninedust didn't even dare to block, instead transforming into a wave of water which frantically retreated.

Swish. Archon Silksnow used the saber in his left hand to strike at Ning. As for the saber in his right hand, he hacked at Ninedust with it. Slash!

The vast stream of water that was Ninedust was cut in half from the very center, and a low growl could be heard emanating from within it. Moments later, the two streams of water quickly began to flee. Only when they fled next to Ning did they reform into a single fleshly body.

Ning had flown out of the gorge. He stood alongside Ninedust, ugly looks on their faces. “I've already reached the Archon level, but I never imagined that the difference between me and an actual Archon of a Sacred City would be so great.” Ning's heart was shaking.

“Too powerful. He's too powerful. My invulnerable aquaform has been highly perfected, but he was still able to heavily injure me with one blow.” Ninedust's face was rather ashen. He sent mentally, “Darknorth, this Archon Silksnow is too powerful. He'd probably be able to kill me in just ten or so blows.”

Ning nodded slightly. Invulnerable forms weren't truly invincible! When Emperor Solesky had been a Daolord, he had been heavily injured by Fiendqueen Dustrain. If an enemy was at a sufficiently high level of power, not even an invulnerable form could completely nullify the attack.

“Hm. Daolord Darknorth... no wonder you rose to pre-eminence in the

Waveshift Realm.” Archon Silksnow stared at Ning with his oily green eyes. “Your friend, the Ninedust Sectlord, has an invulnerable aquaform, but I was able to injure him heavily. You, however... you weren’t injured by my strike at all. Haha... given your level of power, you should’ve reached the Archon level by now.”

“However... you are still far from being a match for me.” Archon Silksnow smiled a cold, blood-curdling smile. “I’ve always had the habit of striking with full power when I attack, even if my target is a Daolord. The two of you can die now.” Archon Silksnow suddenly manifested a total of six arms, with each arm gripping a saber.

“Wait!” Ninedust called loudly.

“Oh?” Archon Silksnow looked coldly at Ning and Ninedust. “Is there something which the two of you wish to say?”

“Archon Silksnow, we are just Daolords; there’s no way we can match an Archon like yourself. If there’s something you want, you can just tell us,” Ning said.

“Yes, Archon. If there’s something you want, we can negotiate,” Ninedust agreed hurriedly.

Although the two had set up quite a few formations on this planet, they still weren’t confident in their chances. They had quite a few treasures, yes... but would the most savage of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities, Archon Silksnow, possibly have fewer treasures than them? He probably had more than ten times as many as they did! Even worse, their earlier clash had already shown Ning and Ninedust how huge the power gap between them was.

Ninedust would probably be slain within just ten strikes! As for Ning? He knew just how big the gap between him and his foe was. Archon Silksnow was highly ranked even for one of the lords of the Sacred Cities, and he was incredibly powerful. He had also been alive for an extremely long period of time. Although he didn’t have a Universe treasure, he did have lifeblood weapons! Those lifeblood weapons had grown over the course of many years to become just as powerful as Ning’s Northbow

swords.

Ning didn't even have an advantage in weaponry! As for insight into the Dao? He was superior to supreme Daolords, yes, but there was a clear difference between him and the Archons! That saber-strike from earlier... it was superior to Ning's sword-arts in every single aspect. Ning's Soleheart stance was able to mitigate some of his disadvantages, but the difference in power was still great.

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The difference in power was so great that Ning might not be able to escape even if he used up his treasures. It really wasn't worth it for him to risk and sacrifice so much just for a battered piece of a realmship.

Ning and Ninedust stared at the blurry glow surrounding them for ten billion kilometers. Archon Silksnow had immediately used a treasure to block out the surrounding spacetime continuum; from this, they could tell how determined Archon Silksnow was. He was definitely going to acquire the realmship parts, no matter what the cost! Ning could also sense that his sword-arts were no longer capable of tearing through spacetime. If he used the Hegemon's spacetime disc, he might be able to succeed... but he also might fail in his attempt to flee.

His foe was a lord of the Sacred Cities, after all! Ning truly wasn't confident in his chances.

"Negotiate? You wish to negotiate with me?" Archon Silksnow stared downwards at Ning and Ninedust.

"Yes, negotiate." Ninedust said hurriedly, "Archon, you probably came for the sake of our realmship parts, right? To tell you the truth, we brothers sensed the resonance as well. That's why we immediately fled."

"If there's anything you wish from us, Archon, just tell us," Ning said. Faced with such a legendary tyrant, they had no choice but to lower their heads.

Archon Silksnow's most famous action came during a gathering of Emperors in the Dao Alliance's Palace of Immortals. Archon Silksnow

ended up being angered by a dispute caused by clashing interests with the other Emperors! He had suppressed his rage when still inside the Palace, but after they all left he actually consecutively killed the twelve Eternal Emperors who had offended him. This was something which had rendered everyone in the Endless Territories completely speechless.

To occasionally kill a few enemy Emperors due to personal feuds was one thing... but to kill twelve of them because of a fit of pique? This was absolutely crazy! This was why he was famous for being the most savage and bloodthirsty of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities. He was a madman! He was also incredibly strong and had many trump cards ready to play. He had offended and angered many with his actions, and had incurred the displeasure of the other Archons as well. As a result, there had been a great battle which had spanned multiple chaos cycles and resulted in innumerable casualties, but in the end the matter was simply dropped.

“Realmship?” Archon Silksnow glanced at them, a not-quite smile playing at his lips.

“The two of us would naturally keep this information completely secret,” Ninedust said hurriedly. “We are willing to swear oaths that we will definitely keep this secret.”

“You two are quite clever. When you sensed how fast I was moving towards you, you immediately chose to flee.” Archon Silksnow glanced at Ning. “Daolord Darknorth is extremely powerful; if I was just slightly weaker, I probably wouldn’t be able to do anything to him. However... the difference in power between us is too great for you to overcome.”

Archon Silksnow nodded. “Since you are willing to bow your heads, I’ll give you a way to survive.”

Ning and Ninedust both looked at Archon Silksnow.

“First, you must give me all of your treasures, save for your weapons and your armor,” Archon Silksnow said. “Second, you are not to resist and must allow me to read through your memories and your soul. Don’t worry, I’ll swear an oath not to harm your souls or truesouls in the slightest; I simply wish to scan them.”

Ning and Ninedust turned grim. Ninedust said angrily, “Archon, don’t go too far.” Ning’s face turned as cold as ice as well.

Scan their memories? The two were incredibly proud figures. How could they be willing to allow others to rifle through their memories? Ning wasn’t willing to hand over all of his treasures either. The omnigeddon bloodfruit tree and the verdant azuresoul were both incredibly precious treasures. The latter had been personally fashioned by Autarch Bolin and was capable of controlling a Chaos Primordial!

Chapter 18: Spacetime Disc

“Hmph. Once I kill you, I’ll still end up with your treasures,” Archon Silksnow said coldly. “I’m at least willing to let you keep your weapons and your armor; this is an unusual display of mercy from me. As for searching through your memories... I merely wish to learn where you acquired the realmship parts from.”

Realmships were relics created by the Sithe. Since Ji Ning and Ninedust had somehow acquired realmship parts, Archon Silksnow felt certain that they must have visited Sithe ruins. Every single Sithe ruins was akin to a treasure trove; Archon Silksnow naturally wished to learn everything he could about such a place.

“Search through my memories? I’d choose death over that,” Ninedust said coldly.

“Archon, we can give you the realmship parts! We can also swear to keep it all a secret,” Ning said coldly. “If you accept, we’ll hand over the parts right away. If you refuse... our only choice will be to do battle.”

“Hahahaha...” Archon Silksnow raised his head and began to laugh loudly, his laughter echoing throughout the sealed region of ten billion kilometers. “You dare to try and haggle with ME?” A savage, murderous look appeared in his oily green eyes: “Then die!”

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Six streams of dazzling, enormous saber-light chopped downwards towards Ning and Ninedust like curved moons.

“Let’s do this.” Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance, no longer hesitating at all.

“Arise!” Ninedust growled. Instantly, a layer of black light filled with countless flickering runes erupted on the surface of the planet. Space in the area around the planet seemed to have been completely frozen, causing the six curved streaks of saber-light to slow down.

Moments later, blood-colored formation-flags appeared throughout the

planet, causing it to descend into a sea of blood.

Finally, a series of roaring beast phantoms appeared. A total of nineteen beast phantoms charged straight towards Archon Silksnow.

“Go.” Ning activated the treasures he had set down as well. Clank clank clank! A series of deep blue chains appeared out of nowhere behind Archon Silksnow, coiling towards him in an attempt to bind him.

A massive formation appeared as well, transforming the skies into an enormous white chessboard. Directly below the planet, an enormous black chessboard appeared within the void. These two giant chessboards slowly swiveled, causing endless streams of light to connect them together in a cage around Archon Silksnow.

Crack! Boom! Dark-gold lightning flickered and crashed downwards towards Archon Silksnow as well.

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“Quite a few treasures.” Archon Silksnow smiled coldly.

Ning and Ninedust truly were being quite cautious. They had set up treasures and formations of tremendous power. Although Archon Silksnow was extremely strong, these things would still tie him down for a period of time.

“Break!!!” Archon Silksnow let out a savage laugh as a golden disc flew out of his body. The disc rose vertically, its edges incredibly sharp. It emanated a ripple of terrifying power.

Tiiiiiiiiing! The disc emanated an ear-piercing sound that caused the hearts of Ning and Ninedust to tremble. It suddenly expanded in size, becoming almost as large as the planet itself as it spun in a chopping manner at the planet.

Clang! Archon Silksnow wielded a warblade in each of his six harms, effortlessly blocking the deep blue chains that were coiling towards him from behind.

Slash! The giant spinning disc was able to forcibly cut through

everything in its path, breaking through all of the various formations! It must be remembered that even Archon Silksnow would have been forced to spend quite some time and energy breaking through these formations if he was relying on his own power. Now, however, he used the disc to blow through them like rotting deadwood.

All of the formations atop the giant planet were instantly destroyed, and even the planet itself was chopped in half before the remaining power of the disc was used up. Finally, the disc crumbled apart and dissipated.

Ning and Ninedust were both rather caught offguard. “Our formations clearly weren’t capable of killing him. Why did he have to use a treasure to tear through them like that?” Ning’s face was ashen.

“Archon Silksnow is famous for his overbearing manner. I finally understand what that entails.” Ninedust felt a sense of grief.

“Die!” After having destroyed the entire planet the two were on, Archon Silksnow charged straight towards Ning and Ninedust.

Ning waved his hand, pulling Ninedust into his estate-world. “Ninedust, I’ll come up with a way to escape. I think I have a chance of fleeing, but if I cannot... just pray.”

“Darknorth.” Ninedust gritted his teeth after being drawn into the estate-world. However, he knew that the difference in power between him and Archon Silksnow was simply far too great. Ning might be able to struggle for a bit, but it would be suicide for Ninedust to try and fight as well.

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After putting Ninedust away, Ning immediately charged into the skies and began to fly even higher. “Break!” Ning attempted to tear through space, but the blurry golden light which covered an area of ten billion kilometers around them caused spacetime to stabilize to such a degree that there was no way to tear through it at all.

“Let’s go.” Ning produced a strange black-and-white disc in his hands. This was the spacetime disk which Hegemon Brightshore had given him

all those years ago. He instantly activated the power hidden within it, causing a terrifying ripple of might to descend and envelope him, then tear forcibly through the frozen spacetime.

Rumble... the vast halo of golden light began to shudder as though it was trying to suppress the effects of the item.

“What?!” Archon Silksnow revealed a look of shock. “Is that... a spacetime disc? Hegemon Brightshore’s spacetime disc?” Given how long he had been around for, Archon Silksnow was naturally quite familiar with this type of spacetime disc. In truth, all of the top-tier elites of the Endless Territories knew how much Hegemon Brightshore cared about his royal clan, the Brightshore Imperials, and how much he cared about the Daolords of the Twelve Palaces.

For Hegemon Brightshore to bestow a spacetime disc upon a Daolord was a sign that the Hegemon viewed that person with great favor. Most major powers would give face upon seeing it and not act against the person in question.

“Hmph. For the sake of the realmship and the Sithe legacies, I’ll just bear the consequences,” Archon Silksnow said with a cold smile.

The power of the spacetime disc was doing its best to tear through spacetime, while the ten billion kilometers of blurry light was doing its best to stabilize and suppress it. The two were battling against each other.

Crack! The black-white disc in Ning’s hands suddenly and completely shattered apart. The blurry light covering the surrounding area was now much dimmer... but it was still there.

“It failed.” Ning was stunned. This was the most formidable escape treasure he had available to him... but he still hadn’t been able to breach the frozen field of spacetime. “What should I do now?”

Ning’s heart was ice-cold. His most formidable fleeing treasure had failed, while he wasn’t strong enough to overcome his opponent... what was he to do?

“If Hegemon Brightshore was here in person, he might be able to breach

this field... but that treasure of yours was nothing more than something he created and infused with part of his power. He's gifted them to quite a few Daolords! If that's all you have, you won't be able to escape... and if you won't be able to escape, you are going to die. That Ninedust Sectlord hiding in your estate-world will die as well." Archon Silksnow's voice boomed outwards. He surpassed Ning in every single aspect, save for the [Heartsword] art! Ning's [Heartsword] art was still too weak; he had merely reached the tenth stance and was still at the first 'stage' of it. It simply couldn't make up for the overwhelming disparity in power between the two.

If Ning was like Emperor Heartsword and had mastered all fifteen stances, he would be truly and freakishly powerful. Alas, breaking through each stage of the [Heartsword] was simply too difficult, as was making a breakthrough with the Omega Sword Dao.

"I can't die. If I die, Ninedust is doomed as well." Ning felt a powerful urge to stay alive. If he died, he would be revived thanks to the Dao-seal he had acquired in that alternate universe... but his weapons and treasures would all be gone. The nine novessence arts and the protective divine ability he had trained in would be lost as well!

The loss of the treasures was secondary, as he would be able to come back to life. Ninedust, however, could not. Ninedust didn't even have a Primaltwin!

"Die then." Archon Silksnow had already appeared in front of him.

"I cannot lose. I cannot be defeated. I still have a chance, a tiny chance!" A terrifying blaze of light appeared in Ning's eyes. "Time to go all out. This sort of deadly battle is extremely effective in helping one understand sword-arts better. I've been training in seclusion for hundreds of millions of years, but I still haven't been able to reach the fourth stage of my Omega Sword Dao. Perhaps if I gain enough insights from this fight, it'll aid me in making my breakthrough."

"If I can reach the fourth stage of the Omega Sword Dao... not only will I be able to stay alive, I'll be able to win!" Ning's eyes were blazing with

unshakable resolve.

“Die.” Archon Silksnow’s saber-light descended. It was so cold as to freeze Ning’s heart, so fast as to cause Ning to shudder. This time, Archon Silksnow struck out at Ning with all six sabers at the same time. Clearly, he wanted to leave nothing up to chance at all and was seeking to slay Ning with one attack.

“I absolutely have to block this.” Ning strove to execute his sword-arts, generating an enormous black hole around him which sought to devour all of the saber-light.

BOOM! This collision was far larger than the last one. Ning was sent flying through the air, a line of blood leaking out from the corner of his lips.

“Haha, you really have some power after all. I used six sabers and struck at you with my full power. I thought that I’d be able to reduce you to dust... but you only suffered a few light wounds. Your protective divine ability truly is formidable.” Archon Silksnow’s voice echoed through the void as he continued to charge after Ning, not pausing at all.

“Thankfully, his strikes are within the realm of what I can endure.” Ning licked the blood from his lips. “Although he’s strong, he won’t be able to kill me. Given my Hegemon armor and my protective divine ability, only a real Hegemon should be able to crush my body in one shot. I still have a chance. I still have a chance!”

“You were able to block me once... but will you be able to block ten times? A hundred times? You are doomed.” Archon Silksnow’s oily green eyes were filled with an awesome savagery.

Chapter 19: A Single Tear

Ji Ning wasn't a fool, nor was he foolishly overconfident. Although he hoped to be able to make use of this deadly battle to break through his current bottleneck, he knew that there were too many variables in play here. He might actually be able to make a breakthrough... but it was more likely that he would fail! Breaking through the bottleneck to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step was no easy task, after all. Ning's path was that of the Omega Sword Dao; if he wanted to break through, it would be even harder than it had been for Ninedust and harder than it would be for Badlands.

He didn't dare to completely entrust all his hopes into making a breakthrough. Thus, as soon as the spacetime disc failed he immediately asked Hegemon Brightshore for aid.

"Send word to Hegemon Brightshore. Tell him that Daolord Darknorth is willing to give him fifty of the coldflame cauldron fruits and all the remaining fruits from Crimsonwave Temple, in order to request the Hegemon to intervene and save his life. Archon Silksnow is currently trying to kill him, and he can die at any moment," Ning instructed the servant who was in charge of maintaining contact between him and the Brightshore Kingdom.

"Yes, Master." The servant was shocked upon hearing how grim the situation was, and he immediately sent word over to the Brightshore Kingdom.

"I hope the Hegemon will intervene," Ning mused to himself. The Hegemon was an exalted figure who was the supreme leader of the entire Brightshore Kingdom! To the supreme figures of the Endless Territories, a Daolord really didn't count for much, no matter how monstrously talented the Daolord was. This was because the more talented a Daolord was, the lower his chances of succeeding in the Daomerge would be. The Brightshore Kingdom had its Twelve Palaces, but in all of its years of existence none of its supreme Daolords had ever succeeded in the Daomerge. Hegemon Brightshore remained the one and only Hegemon of

the Brightshore Kingdom.

Thus... Hegemons generally didn't care about whether Daolords died or not. For them to perish while out adventuring was quite normal. They'd calmly watch as one generation of Daolords after another rose to power, followed by one generation after another perishing...

"But fifty coldflame cauldron fruits might be enough to convince the Hegemon to intervene. Although the Hegemon managed to trade for some of that fruit after our trip to Crimsonwave Temple, I don't think he got fifty," Ning prayed.

"Master, Master! The Hegemon sends word that he is heading towards you with my clone. However, he is going to need some time. He asks you to hold on for a bit," the servant immediately replied.

Boom! Right at this moment, Ning had been knocked backwards with blood leaking from the corner of his lips. He couldn't help but feel delighted upon hearing this. "Good."

"I need to hold on for a bit. If I can hold on for a while, the Hegemon will be able to make it here," Ning thought eagerly. He knew that since the Hegemon wasn't sure as to where he was exactly, the Hegemon needed his servant to guide the way. That delay, combined with what a great distance the Hegemon had to traverse via tearing through spacetime, meant that the Hegemon did need some time before he could arrive.

Normally, such a short period of time was meaningless. However, Ning was in the middle of a life-and-death battle against someone who was one of the lords of the Sacred Cities. That short period of time was quite long in this situation, more than enough for Archon Silksnow to strike a hundred times.

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"Arise." Archon Silksnow's long hair fluttered behind him as he let out a loud shout. Boom! Countless streams of saber-ki flew out from around him, forming a vast world of saber energy that crashed down upon Ning. Clearly, Archon Silksnow wished to end this battle as quickly as possible.

“Come forth!” Ning didn’t dare to hold anything back at all. Nine energy dragons immediately flew out of his body, forming the Yin-Yang Chaos Domain as his awesome heartworld projection came crashing down as well. The heartworld projection merged into the Yin-Yang Chaos Domain, then clashed straight against the surrounding world of saber-ki.

The two domains collided against each other... and the saber-ki domain was actually at a slight disadvantage. This caused Archon Silksnow to feel rather flabbergasted. He then smiled coldly: “So you have a few tricks of your own. However... you are still going to die.”

Archon Silksnow charged straight towards Ning with pure, unadulterated savagery! His six sabers executed his exceptionally brutal and valiant Dao of the Saber. Before his sabers, even spacetime was frozen and even karma was severed!

Attack! Attack! Attack!

“I have to survive. For Ninedust’s sake if nothing else, I have to survive.” Ning labored to defend himself.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The battle between the two caused the skies to darken. Archon Silksnow lived up to his reputation as one of the top three Archons. His attacks were incredibly ferocious, which only made sense; the Dao of the Saber was an offensive Dao, after all. Ning was completely unable to fight back, but when he focused completely on defense his six swords were able to form a truly airtight defense. Still, he was knocked backwards again and again.

“This Daolord Darknorth really is pretty formidable.” Archon Silksnow struck out ten times in a row, but Ning was able to endure all ten attacks. This caused Archon Silksnow to narrow his eyes. “Everyone says that Winesage is the most powerful Daolord, but it seems as though this Daolord Darknorth is actually more powerful than Winesage! I can hardly believe that there’s a Daolord capable of taking ten blows from me in a row.”

In truth, Ning was only able to accomplish this thanks to his [Heartsword] art, which had increased his strength dramatically and made

his sword-arts even faster and more ferocious! Without it, Archon Silksnow probably would've been able to blast Ning's six swords out of his hands and then kill Ning right away!

"He's too resilient. If this continues, I don't even know how many attacks it'll take to kill him." A cold light flashed through Archon Silksnow's oily green eyes. "Forget it. I'll make an exception for him and use my [Icesnow] saber-arts."

Whoosh! Archon Silksnow's six sabers began to move in unison. Three of them became incredibly savage and overbearing, while the other three actually became unpredictable and ephemeral, almost like the dancing of the snow. Their movements were very soft and extremely difficult to see through.

When Ning saw this, his face turned extremely pale. Although the earlier attacks were savage and powerful, they were fairly easy to block as a result. Now that Archon Silksnow was using this strange combination of savagery and softness, merging the principles of Yin and Yang together, blocking the attacks became far more difficult than before. The snow-like saber-arts didn't have as much power behind them, but they were much more troublesome for Ning to defend against.

It was much like how the Heavenbreaker stance was much more powerful than the Blood Drop stance, but the Blood Drop stance was far superior in speed thanks to having sacrificed a degree of power. The most powerful attack wasn't necessarily the best attack.

Clang! Clang! Slash! Slash! Swords and sabers collided nonstop. Ning was forced to use four of his swords to defend against those three sabers executing the unpredictable [Icesnow] saber-art, leaving him only two swords to defend against the other three extremely savage sabers.

BOOM! Using just two swords to defend clearly wasn't enough. A savage burst of power rocked Ning's entire body, causing it to tremble as he was sent flying backwards. Ning vomited out a mouthful a blood, his face ashen. His divine power was being depleted far too quickly. Ning's hands were numb, and even his soul was beginning to feel a bit woozy. Clearly,

his sword-arts weren't able to ablate enough of his enemy's attack power, causing his divine body to endure most of it. As a result, his injuries were now much heavier than before.

"After I became one of the Archons of the Sacred Cities, on the occasions when I acted against Daolords I always used my most powerful and overwhelming attacks to crush them directly. You are the first Daolord I wasn't able to crush in such a manner, forcing me to use my [Icesnow] saber-arts. Normally, I'll only use it when I battle against other Emperors. You should feel proud to die these saber-arts," Archon Silksnow said as he once more charged forwards.

His saber-arts fell upon Ning like the snow, drifting and ephemeral.

His saber-light flashed like lightning, piercing directly into one's heart.

These were two diametrically different types of saber-arts, making it far more difficult to defend against them.

Slash! Ning was starting to grow dizzy from the hits he was taking. His divine body found it hard to endure these attacks, and he was starting to decline from peak condition.

"No. If I let this continue, I'm going to die!" Ning understood that each time he blocked, he was walking on a fine line between life and death. In less than ten stances, he would perish to this opponent.

"If I die, I can be revived thanks to my Dao-seal... but Ninedust will be dead for sure." A surge of indomitable will and resolve came out of Ning's soul. This resolve was absolutely unshakable, a form of power that came from his very spirit... and Ning's sword-arts suddenly changed.

Previously, his strikes had taken the form of mist-formed swords. All of a sudden, the mist began to condense and transform into drops of water. The countless water drops condensed into a sword that looked as though it was made out of water. The watery swords rippled with absolute beauty but emanated a mesmerizing level of might... and both the speed and power of Ning's strikes skyrocketed.

[Heartsword], stance eleven... 'Teardrop'.

Boom! Boom!

The two forces collided. Ning was still knocked flying backwards, and he was still at a disadvantage... but this time, he didn't spit out any blood at all. Clearly, the force of the collision was not enough to cause him any injuries.

"What?!" Archon Silksnow's face completely changed. "The eleventh stance of the [Heartsword] art?!"

"Yes." The distant Ning revealed a smile. "Archon Silksnow, you live up to your reputation. You recognized my technique at a single glance. This is indeed the eleventh stance of the [Heartsword] art."

The reason why it was comparatively easier for cultivators to make breakthroughs in near-death situations was because those situations placed the soul and truesoul under enormous pressure, causing them to enter a special state that made it easier for one to have epiphanies and then make breakthroughs. Ning wasn't just in a life-and-death situation, he was also under the pressure of being responsible for Ninedust's survival. This made his desire to win even stronger, and those strong emotions and tremendous desire to survive caused his [Heartsword] art to finally break through.

In the instant that he made his breakthrough, he finally understood. The eleventh stance of the [Heartsword] art, the 'Teardrop', required incredible resolve and willpower! Long ago, Emperor Heartsword had been facing certain death for the sake of protecting those he loved. He had smiled into the face of death as tears spilled down his face... but in that instant, he had a sudden epiphany and managed to develop the eleventh stance.

Each cultivator had their own paths to take if they wished to create such profound, abstruse sword-arts. God Emperor Helong, for example, had created his [God Emperor's Apocalypse] technique, a technique similar to the [Heartsword] art in that it perfectly merged heartforce, divine power, and Immortal energy together. It also required a terrifying amount of resolve and strong emotions, but the emotions involved had to be a feeling of benevolence and care towards all living beings.

“Only such a blazing level of determination can allow heartforce, divine power, and Immortal energy to merge together in a more perfect manner.” Ning finally understood.

Chapter 20: Hegemon Brightshore

“How is this possible? How could his [Heartsword] art have advanced to the eleventh stance? That means he’ll reach the twelfth stance soon!”

The ‘first stage’ of the [Heartsword] art consisted of the eighth to tenth stances, while the second stage consisted of the eleventh and twelfth stances.

Ning had made consecutive breakthroughs in the ‘first stage’ back when he was in Crimsonwave Temple. Breaking through between stances within the same stage was quite fast, while breaking through from one stage to another was far more difficult. Since Ning had already reached the eleventh stance, the twelfth stance wouldn’t be too far behind.

“Daolord Darknorth’s sword-arts are extremely well-rounded and extremely durable. If he can master the twelfth stance... he’ll be on par with even me.” Archon Silksnow’s killing intent began to grow stronger.

Emperor Heartsword, even after becoming an Eternal Emperor, was only comparable to supreme Daolords when it came to his actual insights into the Dao of the Sword. He was actually weaker in this regard than the current Ning. However, thanks to his mastery of the fifteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art, he had completely eclipsed all other Archons and was second only to the Hegemons. He was known throughout the Endless Territories as the only Emperor who was comparable to Hegemons in power.

Now that Ning had mastered the eleventh stance, the power of his strikes was three times as much as it was ‘normally’. Soon, when he mastered the twelfth stance, his strikes would be comparable to six times his ‘normal’ power! How incredible would this be?

It was all thanks to this terrifying technique that Emperor Heartsword had been able to battle those who were two levels of power above him and be able to battle the three mighty Hegemons!

Boom! Boom! Boom! The two continued to battle furiously. Ning was knocked flying repeatedly, but he was able to endure the blows with ease.

This was because his sword-arts were faster and fiercer than before, allowing him to completely defend against his foe's attacks. "A hundred strikes? I can block even a thousand strikes from him. He might hold the upper hand, but if I completely focus on defense I can endure fairly easily."

"Die, die, die!" Archon Silksnow's oily green eyes grew colder and colder as his saber-arts fluctuated between incomparable savagery and snow-like unpredictability. Ning was completely unable to fight back at all, and with each strike he sent Ning flying away. He was completely dominating Ning, forcing Ning to focus exclusively on defense... but Archon Silksnow really was completely unable to do anything to the defense-oriented Ning.

"His defenses are completely without flaws. His sword-arts have no weaknesses whatsoever." Archon Silksnow was extremely vexed by this; foes with perfect defensive abilities were extremely difficult to deal with. Even those more powerful than Ning would find it hard to breach his defensive sword-arts. "Am I really going to have to use one of my treasures to deal with a single Daolord?"

"Given his current level of power, not even common Hegemon-level treasures are certain to kill him. I would have to use one of my most important treasures." Archon Silksnow felt a bit of heartache at the prospect. "I've only accumulated so many of them despite the passage of countless years... I was planning on using them in critical situations to defend against Hegemons."

Archon Silksnow continued to hesitate as the two exchanged blows. Archon Silksnow was vacillating; he really didn't want to use up his most important treasures. His more ordinary treasures such as 'common' Hegemonic treasures might be precious to Daolords, but Archon Silksnow had quite a few of them. However, those treasures generally only held twenty to thirty percent of the full power of a Hegemon's strike. It wasn't enough to kill an Archon of the Sacred Cities, nor was it enough to kill the current Ning.

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While Archon Silksnow hesitated, he continued to hope that his furious barrage of attacks would be enough to kill Ning. If he could avoid using one of his life-saving treasures, he would do so; he wasn't going to use those things up casually.

Riiiiip. Far away, within the empty void that was beyond the area of ten billion kilometers covered by the blurry light, a tear in spacetime suddenly appeared. This tear was enormous in size, and from it emerged the enormous head of an absolutely titanic beast. The eyes on this head looked like blazing stars, and they turned to stare at the distant field of combat, locking in on both Archon Silksnow and Daolord Darknorth.

Archon Silksnow sensed this new presence, and he immediately turned to look.

"Archon Silksnow, stay your hand," the titanic beast said in a rumbling voice.

"Hegemon Brightshore!" Archon Silksnow's face immediately turned pale. Hegemon Brightshore had actually charged over here in person, using his true body?

Archon Silksnow had been hesitating, but a savage look immediately appeared on his face. He produced an ordinary-looking black hammer in his hands, then immediately tossed it out. The black warhammer transformed into an enormous streak of golden light which smashed straight towards the distant Ning. As it flew, the black warhammer's light began to increase dramatically as it became golden in color.

The warhammer was dazzling to behold, and its aura alone caused Ning to feel the desire to prostrate himself before it. Ning forced down that thought, but he still felt a sense of shock in his heart. He hurriedly crushed two protective treasures, causing a barrier of water to appear around him as well as a strange river to cover him.

"Silksnow!" Hegemon Brightshore was enraged. His enormous body stretched out a single claw which tore straight through the blurry light. Boom! The barrier was completely ripped open. However... by the time he tore through it, the dazzling golden warhammer had already reached

Ning.

BOOM!

A terrifying wave of power smashed against Ning, blasting through the river around him and shattering the watery barrier. Although Ning strove to use his Northbow swords to defend, the power of this strike vastly surpassed the strikes which Archon Silksnow had unleashed previously. Ning's six arms were immediately torn apart, and his six Northbow swords were sent flying as the terrifying power from the strike swept through Ning's entire body.

The power was simply too great.

"I-I... am going to die?" Ning only had enough time to turn his head to glance at the distant Hegemon Brightshore. As Ning stared at the titanic beast, his lips moved slightly. He wanted to say: "Save Ninedust."

Alas, Ning didn't have a chance to say a single word. His body was completely crushed into dust, leaving only a few magic treasures and his armor behind, floating in the void.

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"NO! Damn you!" The blazing, star-like eyes of Hegemon Brightshore were filled with fury. He had already spoken, but Archon Silksnow had actually chosen to kill Ning right in front of him.

Riiiiip. He had already torn straight through the blurry barrier of light. Now, the Hegemon's claw tore straight towards Archon Silksnow.

Archon Silksnow had immediately transformed into a streak of light and flown towards Ning in the same instant that he used up one of his trump cards. He wanted to take away the treasures which Ning had left behind. He knew that Ninedust and the realmship parts were all within Ning's estate-world treasure.

"And you actually think you are going to take the treasures as well?" This enraged Hegemon Brightshore even further. His eyes emanated an aura of blurry light which caused spacetime to congeal in the surrounding area. A wave of invisible pressure crushed down upon Archon Silksnow,

causing him to dramatically slow down. As for Hegemon Brightshore's claws, they tore straight through space itself as they reached out towards Archon Silksnow. Previously, that aura of blurry light had condensed local spacetime... but now that it had been destroyed, Hegemon Brightshore's attacks were able to almost instantly reach the target.

"So fast! The old man really lives up to his reputation as the premier Hegemon amongst the three Hegemons in our realmverse." Archon Silksnow hurriedly used his saber-arts to defend against that terrifying claw.

BOOM! The terrifying claw-strike came, filled with such power that it was equal in might to the black warhammer treasure which Archon Silksnow had just used. Archon Silksnow was instantly shattered into tiny pieces of snow, but that snow quickly reassembled far away into Archon Silksnow once more.

When Autarch Bolin was a Hegemon, he had trained and mastered a total of ten Hegemonic Daos! All that accumulated experience had allowed him to break through to become an Autarch. Emperors possessed endless lifespans and thus would generally train in many Daos, hoping that these other Daos might stimulate and inspire them! Emperor Silksnow himself was skilled in both the Dao of the Saber and the Dao of Snow.

He had undergone the Daomerge via his Dao of the Saber and reached the Archon level of power. Over the course of countless years, he had slowly upgraded his Dao of Snow to that same level. Clearly, he wanted to use these two Daos to inspire him and slowly train to the Hegemon level via them.

It was possible for Emperors to train and cultivate, but improving was extremely difficult. Every single person who had been alive for that long, however, had life-preserving abilities available to them. The difference in power between Archons and Hegemons was quite apparent, and in a real head-on battle the Archon would definitely perish.

However, some Archons had defensive techniques like invulnerable

forms, while others were extremely skilled in other ways. For example, if one was extremely proficient in the Dao of Numerancy, one would be forewarned of danger and flee early on. Alternately, if one had an extremely formidable evasion art then one would be able to rely on it to escape and prevent even Hegemons from catching up to them and killing them.

Ning had already reached the Archon level, true... but he had merely trained in the Omega Sword Dao and didn't have an invulnerable form. In addition, he had only been training for a very brief period of time and had not accumulated enough treasures yet. There was simply no way for him to compete against the likes of Archon Silksnow. The elder Archons had accumulated many treasures of the years, some of which could have an impact on even actual Hegemons.

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"Hegemon Brightshore, are you really going to interfere over me killing a mere Daolord?" Archon Silksnow stood off in the distance. Although he was unhappy, he suppressed his anger. "You and I have both lived in the Endless Territories for countless years. These Daolords come and go; they are nothing more than passersby in our life. Daolord Darknorth angered me, so I decided to kill him; this is a minor matter. You, an exalted Hegemon, actually decided to interfere? This is a bit much, isn't it?"

Hegemon Brightshore's voice boomed out sonorously from afar: "Archon Silksnow, this was indeed a minor matter... but since I spoke out, you should've been willing to discuss things peaceably. You actually dared to kill Darknorth right in front of me!"

"This little thief was lucky enough to steal an item I needed," Archon Silksnow said. "Hegemon Brightshore, I don't want any of his other treasures, but I do want that little thief's estate-world. If you are willing to give it to me, you can list any conditions you want."

"Hmph, you killed Darknorth in front of me... and you think you'll earn his treasures?" Hegemon Brightshore said coldly, "Fuck off. If you don't... don't blame me for showing no mercy."

“You...!” Archon Silksnow had an ugly look on his face.

“I said FUCK OFF!” Hegemon Brightshore’s voice deepened even further.

“Fine. A Hegemon really is a Hegemon. I’ll accede to your request this time.” Archon Silksnow ground his teeth, then turned and disappeared within a dimensional ripple.

The reason why Archon Silksnow had chosen to kill Ning at that critical moment was partially for the sake of the realmship... but more importantly, he wanted to pull up grass by the roots! He understood that so long as Ning survived, Ning would quickly be able to master the twelfth stance of the [Heartsword] art. By then, the difference in power between the two would be very small. There was already a feud between them. If Ning failed his Daomerge, it would be guaranteed that Ning would die. If he went crazy before dying... while Archon Silksnow himself would be able to keep himself alive, the foundations of power he had spent countless aeons establishing might be completely annihilated by the maddened Ning.

If Ning succeeded in the Daomerge? Things would be even worse! Thus, he had to kill Ning right away. Taking the treasure was just a secondary benefit. Alas... the Hegemon had stopped him.

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Hegemon Brightshore watched as Archon Silksnow left, neither chasing nor attacking. Killing Archon Silksnow would be no easy feat.

The Hegemon’s titanic figure blurred, transforming into a humanoid figure. He returned to his normal form of a snowy-robed, white-bearded old man with six curved horns on his head. He waved his hand, collecting the Northbow swords, estate-world, armor, and other treasures Ning had left behind. He murmured softly to himself, “These treasures actually still have an owner? Daolord Darknorth actually didn’t die... can it be that he has a Primaltwin?”

Hegemon Brightshore revealed a smile. He felt rather apologetic towards Ning for not having been able to rescue him, but now he felt much better. “He really does have a few tricks up his sleeve. Since he didn’t die... his

avatar should be at Vastheaven Palace. I'll pay it a visit." Hegemon Brightshore took a single step forward, tearing through spacetime as he travelled towards Vastheaven Palace.

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